LAYING ASIDE THE ELDER WAND:
RESISTING EMPIRE AND TYRANNY IN MARK 10:32−45

by

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A dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Christian Theology)

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2021

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Christian Theology)

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE:	Laying Aside the Elder Wand: Resisting Empire and Tyranny in Mark 10:32–45
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SUPERVISORS:	Dr. Cynthia Long Westfall, Dr. Christopher Land
NUMBER OF PAGES:	ix + 276

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

this dissertation by

Caroline Anne Schleier Cutler

is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY)

Primary Supervisor: Cynthia Long Westfall — Digitally signed by Cynthia Long Westfall Date: 2021.12.13 15:40:25 -05'00'

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Date: December 10, 2021

ABSTRACT

"Laying Aside the Elder Wand: Resisting Empire and Tyranny in Mark 10:32–45"

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Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of Mark is someone who would resonate with readers of Harry Potter because of his words and acts of resistance and justice. However, for many of them there are obstacles to even reading the Markan Gospel. Some of them are unsympathetic to Mark's Jesus because of unfavourable perceptions of Christianity and the Bible. Others are merely uninterested or are unfamiliar with what the Markan story really is. The purpose of this study is to explore how Mark can be read using a popular culture reading lens, like the Harry Potter literature, to expand the horizons of the Harry Potter audience. An examination of the social and historical background will provide a first-century context of resistance to oppression. Using the Harry Potter lens, I will juxtapose that text with the Gospel of Mark as a whole to show that there is a pattern of resistance enacted by Jesus throughout. I will then carry out an exegetical analysis of Mark 10:32–45, again juxtaposing it with the Harry Potter text. The intertextual connections drawn from this analysis will be considered in terms of how they can impact the Harry Potter audience and provide them with new horizons. This project will therefore offer a unique hermeneutical take on how today's Harry Potter audience can be given a reading strategy to help them read Mark 10:32–45 through the lens of the Harry Potter novels. This lens allows the reader to both transform and be transformed by

the Markan text and will highlight how Jesus acts to resist and subvert the role of tyrannical rule in the lives of his followers, much like the resistance and subversion seen in the story of Harry Potter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my husband and children throughout this process. Brian, Rachel, and Andrew—you are the best! Your words of encouragement and the -laughter you inspired were often just what I needed. They helped me to keep going even when it was difficult. Over a year of the writing of this dissertation took place during the Covid-19 pandemic which presented particular challenges to our family, as to so many others. Words cannot fully express how important it was to have my family to rely on.

This work would not be what it is without the wisdom and encouragement of my doctoral advisors, Cynthia Westfall and Christopher Land. The many ways they have challenged me have helped me to produce what I am convinced is a better work. They often provided a new way of looking at things, something I greatly value. Moreover, they were supportive of my choice of topic and methodology, although it was somewhat unique in this discipline, and worked with me to hone and refine it with respect to its significance for New Testament studies.

I am grateful to the many friends and family members who have encouraged and prayed for me during this time. I am especially indebted to my friend Leslie who made a home away from home for me during the times I was in Hamilton and was always there to listen.

Finally, I have been inspired by the many resisters of oppression and injustice throughout history as well as in our present time. Among them is the one whom I see as a resister par excellence: Jesus, whose story the Markan evangelist has left for us. These courageous resisters have stood in solidarity with those who have been marginalized and persecuted, often having been marginalized and persecuted themselves. They have put others first. To them I dedicate what I have written here.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BPA	Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies
CBQ	*The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CSPC	Contributions to the Study of Popular Culture
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
GTI	Guides to Theological Inquiry
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HvTSt	*Hervormde teologiese studies*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplement to the Novum Testamentum
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PCNT	Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SIDA	*Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
TSFK	Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT2	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2

INTRODUCTION

Oppression and tyranny have been with us throughout history. Moreover, resistance has been a predictable response to oppression, whether that response be hidden or more public. As I write this in the beginning of the year 2021, it seems that resistance and protest are becoming more and more widespread. Whether this is because oppression has also become more ubiquitous or because technology has brought it to the attention of more people, we are witnesses to an abundance of resistance movements and increasing numbers of people protesting in various ways. I would argue that this upswing in resistance is meeting a deeply felt need in our society. The horrific death of George Floyd at the hands of police on May 25, 2020 is but one example of the systemic oppression that is endemic in North America but also globally. Resistance is the natural response to such oppression. The Bible itself is a witness to resistance in the face of oppression. The Gospel of Mark is one piece of that witness, but it is an important piece. Resisting oppression is an important theme in the Gospel narrative and Jesus is at the heart of that resistance story. He resists against the oppression and marginalization of vulnerable people, empowering them and his disciples to also follow him in choosing a better, more just way. However, many readers of the Gospels or, more to the point, many who would not even consider reading them, are likely not to see Jesus as a resister of oppression or a liberating figure.

In light of the felt human need to resist oppression, it is meaningful that the audience of the Harry Potter novels written by J. K. Rowling is drawn to a body of work that is also especially concerned with resisting oppression. This says something about what the Harry Potter audience is looking for—an engagement with justice concerns. However, shared focus towards overcoming oppression does not mean that a Harry Potter audience would necessarily be sympathetic to the story of Jesus as told in the Gospel of Mark. Indeed, many of them would be *unsympathetic* to hearing this story, and this has much to do with the perception that Christianity and the Bible have nowadays—in the general public, but especially among Millennials and Generation Z.[1] Many Millennials, who form the largest proportion of the Harry Potter fan-base, are leaving churches or have never had any connection with a church. The reasons for this are several and complex, but a good part of it has to do with disillusionment with Christianity.[2] This is not surprising. In Canada, for instance, the colonial context of the church has been on constant display in the news recently, with the reports of mass graves of indigenous children being found at former residential school sites.[3] Thus, one of the reasons some are unsympathetic to the biblical writings is that they feel hurt and betrayed by the church (or certain segments of it). Millennials who are not part of the Christian faith often have "ambivalent and sometimes extremely negative views about the Bible."[4] Some see it as being used to oppress and exclude people. It is therefore not

[1] Lee Beach describes what this looks like as follows: "Christianity has been gradually losing its status as the lingua franca in Western culture for some time and has increasingly tended to become a local language used only by those who are professing Christians, not understood by others" (Beach, *Church in Exile*, 33).

[2] Riess, "Why Millennials;" Kaleem, "One-Third of Millennials." The situation is similar among Generation Z (Manning, "Gen Z").

[3] Dawson, "What Happens Next;" Eneas, "Sask. First Nation."

[4] Barna Group, "Millennials and the Bible," para. 5.

shocking that they would have an unsympathetic assessment of any of the biblical writings, including the Gospel of Mark.

Nevertheless, these unsympathetic Millennial and Generation Z potential readers of the Gospel of Mark are the target audience being considered in this study.[5] Although many of the principles developed here will apply to audiences of other popular culture works or the arts, the audience in view here is readers of the Harry Potter literature, particularly those who would have an unsympathetic view of Jesus in the Markan Gospel. This is not to say that it is necessary to be readers of Harry Potter in order to have a sympathetic reading of the Gospel of Mark. However, the understanding here is that providing a reading lens to those who are not sympathetic readers but who do have an attachment to the Harry Potter story has the potential to be transformative for them.

In Mark 10:42−43a, Jesus calls over his disciples and says to them: "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you."[6] Jesus' objective in saying these words was to, in effect, resist empire and tyranny by undermining the power-grabbing and oppressive acts exhibited by these tyrannical rulers. In his first-century Palestinian context, Jesus would have been referring to the Roman Empire. However, his words would have also had a broader meaning to include all types of *empire* and tyranny. His words thus act to reframe power and authority among his

[5] This is not to discount other age groups. The Harry Potter series is categorized as Young Adult (YA) literature which is becoming increasingly popular with a much wider audience than the word "young" would suggest. According to Antero Garcia, YA literature has often "been marginalized and even demonized" throughout its history but has recently become quite popular among adults of all ages (Garcia, *Critical Foundations*, xi). I, at age 58, am a prime example of an older Harry Potter enthusiast. However, most Harry Potter fans have grown up with him as Millennials. It is this group that is also more likely to be unsympathetic to the Jesus of the Gospels.

[6] All biblical references are from the NRSV unless stated otherwise.

followers. The anti-empire flavour of his words here is an important milestone in a pattern of resistance seen throughout the Gospel of Mark. Examining some of the literary elements of Mark 10:32–45 will help to highlight this pattern. This analysis will be informed by postcolonial and empire studies, as well as feminist criticism. All of this has the potential to resonate with Harry Potter readers who are concerned with the concept of resisting oppression. However, the question is how to *connect* them with the story of Jesus told in the Gospel of Mark. That, in itself, is a critical element. This audience of story lovers needs to also see Mark's Gospel as an engaging story if they are going to invest in it. How can they be encouraged to not only read the Gospel narrative but to *experience* it so it has an impact on them? The purpose of this study is to show how Mark's story of Jesus can be introduced to the reluctant Harry Potter audience in a way that will communicate how it can be read through the lens of the Harry Potter narrative.[7] This will be done by doing a popular culture. A popular culture analysis will be central in the hermeneutical task of exploring how the Harry Potter audience can both be transformed by and transform the biblical text. For those who are Harry Potter enthusiasts, these novels can provide a hermeneutical lens to help enact such a two-way transformation. In the context of this particular study, this transformative exercise will be facilitated by means of juxtaposing the two texts. The Harry Potter literature can therefore provide a hermeneutical reading of the Gospel of Mark that, if communicated effectively, can attach this particular audience to Jesus as told about in Mark's good news story.

[7] This recognizes that some Harry Potter readers are not at all reluctant to read the Bible or the Gospel of Mark. However, my work here addresses that segment of the Harry Potter audience who *is* reluctant to read and unsympathetic towards the Markan story of Jesus.

In the context of a journey to Jerusalem (Mark 10:32), Jesus gives his third passion prediction, describing his impending death and resurrection. Subsequently, James and John come to him requesting to be on his right and left in his glory. This discussion is followed by Jesus' instructions to the Twelve concerning servanthood, including the words from Mark 10:42–43a referred to above. This episode in Mark 10:32–45 will be the primary focus of this proposal, while bringing together themes of power, domination, and resistance from the whole Gospel.

The Gospel of Mark in Recent Research

Within recent Markan studies, there has been a movement towards understanding the Gospel of Mark as a narrative. This particular stream of Markan studies will be significant for a project concerned with conveying the Gospel as a story. I will thus place this study within that stream. A more particular focus on work that has been done on Mark 10:32−45 will be taken. Prominent and relevant themes that arise in several of the works examined here are: reversals of power structures, resistance to power structures, and how irony is used in the passage.

A number of biblical scholars in the early to mid-twentieth century significantly influenced the direction of Markan studies with research relevant to the subject of this investigation. The main contribution of source criticism to the discussion of the Gospel of Mark is the concept of Markan priority. The most popular recent approach to the Synoptic Problem has been the Two-Source Hypothesis.[8] B. H. Streeter was a major

[8] Goodacre, *Synoptic Problem*, 21. Another less accepted approach, the Griesbach Theory, suggests that Mark was written last and used Matthew, which was written first, and Luke, who relied on Matthew (Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem*, 22).

proponent of this theory which proposed that Matthew and Luke relied on the earlier composed Gospel of Mark as well as the 'Q' document.[9] Also holding to Markan priority but rejecting Q, Austin Farrer later put forward the theory that Matthew drew from Mark, and later Luke was dependent on both.[10] The concept of Markan priority contributed to a significant increase in scholarly focus on Mark in the twentieth century which set the stage for its study using methods such as literary and narrative criticism.

The work of Martin Dibelius in form criticism influenced his view of the Gospels. He proposed the following as "the fundamental hypothesis" of form criticism: "When . . . we trace the tradition back to its initial stage we find no descriptions of the life of Jesus, but short, separate paragraphs or pericopæ."[11] Vincent Taylor found much of constructive value in form criticism but also recognized its "manifest defects."[12] To him, Mark was largely concerned with the history of Christian origins.[13] He saw the account of the third passion prophecy as "a definite historical situation . . . described with great vividness"[14] and also remarked on the credibility of the James and John tradition in 10:35–40.[15] However, he saw 10:41–45 as merely a series of sayings.[16] Neither of these scholars considered Mark's Gospel as a whole narrative.

It is apparent that the narrative character of the Gospel of Mark was minimized in historical criticism. Therefore, one of the pivotal developments in Markan studies has been the advent of narrative criticism in the 1970s. David Rhoads was one of the main

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[9] Streeter, "Modern Criticism," 435.
[10] Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q," 56, 85–86.
[11] Dibelius, *Gospel Criticism*, 27.
[12] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, vii.
[13] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 149.
[14] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 436.
[15] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 439.
[16] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 442–43.

proponents of this approach, coining the phrase "narrative criticism" to describe the investigation of literary and rhetorical features of the Gospel narratives.[17] In a seminal article, he articulated some of the decisive events that were shaping what came to be a narrative critical approach to interpreting biblical texts. This included innovative scholarship that was happening in the Society of Biblical Literature's Markan Seminar.[18] An important outcome of all of this was the publication of Rhoads' and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story* in 1982, with biblical scholar Joanna Dewey joining them as co-author in the two later editions (published in 1999 and 2012). Dewey's work on the orality of the Markan narrative had already been influential at this point.[19]

A number of the contributions made by the proponents of narrative criticism and literary approaches in general will be worth considering for the topic of this study, particularly the literary context of the Mark 10 episode within the Gospel. One of the key characteristics in this respect is the movement away from historical criticism. Unlike form critics who saw the Gospel of Mark as a series of individual pericopes strung together, narrative critics like Rhoads see episodes as very much part of the larger narrative.[20] Using the narrative feature of "standards of judgment" helped Rhoads understand the following to be a central purpose of the Gospel of Mark: "Mark wrote about Jesus to show that any attempt to dominate others by force—either by Rome or by Israel—was contrary to the values God calls forth from people in the rule of God."[21]

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[17] Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism," 411−12; Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 284.
[18] Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism;" Rhoads, *Reading Mark*, xi.
[19] For example, Dewey, "Oral Methods," 32–44.
[20] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 4.
[21] Rhoads, *Reading Mark*, 61. See 49–50 for how this purpose might relate to Mark 10:42–44: "In thus turning the world upside down, Jesus clearly opposes oppression. He means to stop the cycle of oppression and replace it with a cycle of service."

Robert Tannehill uses a narrative Christological approach to explore how elements such as paradox and irony allow the Markan author to communicate certain ideas to the audience by means of the Jesus story.[22] Jerry Camery-Hoggatt uses literary criticism and a focus on the social background of the text to explore irony in the Gospel of Mark.[23] He proposes that irony is central to the Markan narrative and thus would be fruitful for *all* readings, including those that are theological, historical, and sociological.[24] He observes pronounced ironies in the form of double entendres throughout Mark 8:22—10:52.[25] Specifically, he finds dramatic irony in Mark 10:35–40.[26] This will be helpful in exploring how irony reveals the power dynamics in this Markan text.

The particular lenses that scholars use to examine the text and the particular themes that they see as dominant have a significant impact on what they will emphasize in their interpretation. This is seen in several Markan commentaries. Morna Hooker sees Jesus' suffering and death as a central feature of the story of Mark. This influences her discussion of the Mark 10 episode which she examines in terms of the cross and suffering.[27] It also affects how she sees certain literary features, such as irony, working themselves out in the episode.[28] Alan Culpepper was already well established as a narrative critic when he wrote his commentary on Mark.[29] While bringing together numerous traditions within Markan scholarship, this narrative focus helps him to place

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[22] Tannehill, "Gospel of Mark," 89.

[23] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 14.

[24] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 13. Daniel Harrington states, "The strength of Camery-Hoggatt's work is that it explores in depth one literary device that is recurrent in the text and gives it literary unity" (Harrington, *What Are They Saying?*, 15).

[25] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 157.

[26] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161–63.

[27] Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 21−22.

[28] Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 246−47.

[29] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.

Mark 10:32–45 within the story as a whole, including possible connections with 6:21–22.[30] Sharyn Dowd maintains that the Gospel "does not consist of discrete sections connected end to end, but of threads woven into a narrative 'tapestry'—of themes and motifs that resound and 'echo' again and again."[31] It will therefore be useful to examine Mark 10:32–45 as an example or culmination of core themes developed throughout the narrative.

Some of the more current work on Mark includes approaches such as reader-response criticism and ideological criticisms including Marxist and feminist criticism. Robert Fowler's *Let the Reader Understand* is an important example of how to use reader-response criticism to write about "the experience of reading the Gospel of Mark."[32] This will have important implications hermeneutically for understanding how the reader can transform the text. Ched Myers offers a political reading of the Gospel of Mark in *Binding the Strong Man* based on some of the ideological features of Marxism.[33] He sees Mark 10:42 describing "leadership-as-dominance" by the Roman colonial officials and suggests that Jesus, alluding to Ps 110:1–2, is interpreting James and John's request to be at his right as an appeal to dominate.[34] He also interprets the passage as a rejection of patriarchy and an affirmation of the leadership of women by Jesus.[35] Susan Miller uses a unique combination of feminist interpretation and historical

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[30] Culpepper, *Mark*, 345, 348−49.
[31] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 2.
[32] Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 1.
[33] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 4–7, 36. While Myers aligns himself with some Marxist principles, particularly ideological and methodological ones, he also resonates more "with the biblical narrative of liberation, from which Marxism is, at most, derivative" (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 36–37).
[34] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 278–79.
[35] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 280–81.

criticism to investigate the women in the Gospel of Mark.[36] She sees the women in Mark as exemplars of the kind of service and self-giving that Jesus promoted and embodied and Mark 10:42–45 is therefore a central component of her argument.[37] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon bases her feminist interpretive approach on narrative criticism.[38] Her observation that the twelve *male* disciples are the audience of Jesus' instructions in 10:41–45, rather than women, slaves, and children who have much less power, is worth exploring.[39]

Postcolonial and empire studies have also made important contributions to research on Mark. Simon Samuel's postcolonial strategy of reading the Gospel of Mark permits him to see it as a narrative that "accommodates and disrupts both the native Jewish and the Roman colonial codes, cultural categories, discourses, and their perception of power."[40] Through this lens, he explores "the *modus operandi* of the imperial system of tyrants and rulers" in reference to the Gentiles in Mark 10:33–34.[41] Richard Horsley sees Mark as a story about people who are subjected by the Roman Empire and their resistance to that empire.[42] He also sees the story elements of the Gospel as presenting a certain view on the key theme of power relations and he considers the Mark 10 episode as central to this theme.[43] The "pervasive irony" in the narrative helps to reveal themes of resistance and power relations.[44] Horsley also points

[36] Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 8.
[37] Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 193–95, 202–4.
[38] Malbon, "Gospel of Mark," 478.
[39] Malbon, "Gospel of Mark," 488.
[40] Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 159.
[41] Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 133. See the reference to Gentiles in Mark 10:42.
[42] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, xiii, 25; cf. xii.
[43] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 11; 228.
[44] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 25.

to the strong vocabulary used concerning the "great ones" in 10:42 showing that they are "tyrannically exercising absolute domination."[45]

Alberto de Mingo Kaminouchi has written an entire monograph on Mark 10:32–45. He examines the power dynamics of this text and places a strong emphasis on irony and repetition as well as the "strong political overtones" behind the passage.[46] He explores how the words of Jesus resist and subvert the powerful through metaphor and irony.[47] He looks at the role of repetition in highlighting power issues, especially what he refers to as the "crescendo" of the passion predictions leading to a pronounced emphasis on the episode associated with the third passion prediction.[48] This therefore underscores the importance of the text as well as the importance of the topic of power dynamics brought out in the text. Kaminouchi suggests that the disciples are "thirsty for power" in Mark 10.[49] It is worth exploring further in what ways Mark 10:32–45 is a critique of those thirsty for power. Kaminouchi's analysis of Mark 10:32–45 will therefore supplement my own investigation of how the Gospel of Mark can be read by today's audience through the lens of popular culture.

Applying the Lens

The above survey has featured a wide array of scholarship in the area of Markan studies. Many of these contributions will be springboards for my research. This project will offer a unique hermeneutical take on how the Harry Potter audience can be given a reading

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[45] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 194.
[46] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 151.
[47] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 5.
[48] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 57, 88; cf. 10.
[49] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 70.

strategy to help them read the Gospel of Mark through the lens of Harry Potter. This lens allows the reader to both transform and be transformed by the Markan text. The application of this lens will be carried out by doing an exegetical analysis of the text of Mark 10:32–45. This intertextual work will help to clarify the lens and how it can be used by the Harry Potter audience. The topic of resistance will be a key focus. I will explore how power reversals and resistance to tyranny can be revealed in the literary features (parody, irony, humour, and repetition) of the text of Mark 10:32–45. By juxtaposing the two texts, I will examine the narrative of the Gospel as a whole in terms of oppression and resistance, areas that specifically relate to Mark 10:32–45. A pattern of resistance to tyranny throughout the Markan narrative will thus be outlined, including how Jesus uses his words to resist and subvert the "Domination System" which Walter Wink defines as "what happens when an entire network of Powers becomes integrated around idolatrous values."[50] A particular focus will be how Jesus engages these powers in a way that mocks and ridicules them through parody and irony, especially in how he describes the so-called "rulers" in 10:42.[51] The kind of resistance Jesus portrays in the episode and in the whole Gospel is a subversive and powerful means of resistance. This will be useful for making connections with an audience of Harry Potter readers concerned with matters of justice.

Also of significance is the *nature* of the power structures in the Mark 10 episode. Concerning this, Mark 10:42–43 can be understood as follows: Jesus characterizes those who are recognized as rulers in 10:42 as coercive, oppressive, and tyrannical. This

[50] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 9. See also Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 187, 207.

[51] See Wink's proposal that this is what Jesus is doing in Matt 5:38–42 (Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 175–86).

description would fit how the Roman imperial rulers and their retainers were using power, including in the Palestinian context.[52] He therefore charges his followers to refuse to participate in such power arrangements in 10:43. This stance toward tyrannical rule has a clear parallel with the Harry Potter literature. The manner in which Jesus asks his disciples to resist tyranny and empire in Mark 10:32−45 by rejecting it and not buying into it is one of the main ways that he promotes resistance. Harry Potter also rejects such power by laying it aside in the form of the Elder Wand. Harry is here rejecting the same kind of coercive power and tyranny seen in the characters Voldemort and Dolores Umbridge, that Jesus is describing in Mark 10:42.[53] This laying-aside image will therefore be critical for my research, helping to illuminate what Jesus is saying in Mark 10. Hence, the title of this work: "Laying Aside the Elder Wand." Juxtaposing the two texts will therefore help to uncover significant parallels between Harry Potter and Mark and will help to emphasize the theme of resisting tyranny and empire. I argue that this will especially be the case with Mark 10:32–45. The parallels discovered will, in turn, help to illuminate how today's audience can hear the Markan story *with* a story they are already familiar with, the story recounted in the Harry Potter novels.

As important as this particular episode will be, it is also necessary to consider it within the Gospel as a whole. It is one episode within a story. Mark is directing the audience to focus on this particular episode by building on each consecutive passion prediction until the last one reaches a "crescendo"[54] This serves to highlight the

[52] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 13–34.
[53] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 11–12, 22.
[54] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 57, 88; cf. 10.

prominence of the episode that follows this prediction indicating that the episode and its subject matter are important to the author. Thus, the flow of the episode—the enhanced passion prediction and the encounter with James and John and its dramatic irony—have the effect of drawing attention to Jesus' words that follow, showing them to be insistent and compelling. These are features that it will be important to draw to the attention of Harry Potter readers.

All readers have lenses of various kinds whether we recognize them or not. What I am proposing here is a more intentional approach where readers can acknowledge their lenses or discover new ones. A particular lens can then be used to bring out insights and themes from the biblical texts which might otherwise remain hidden. This investigation is therefore intended show how a particular popular culture work (the Harry Potter books) can be used as a lens to enhance the reading of the Gospel of Mark and shape both the reader and the text. This will be a practical test of how such a reading through the lens of popular culture can be done and what insights might be gained. In other words, the results of this study can begin a conversation about how biblical scholars can inspire today's readers to use works of popular culture, as well as so-called higher culture, as lenses to read biblical literature. This will hopefully be a means of bridging the gap between biblical scholarship and lay readers (and potential readers) of the Gospels and other biblical literature. It will also be a means for those who teach the Bible to help students "to become critical and creative readers and thinkers" through the use of popular culture.[55]

[55] Roncace and Gray, "Introduction," 2−3.

Today's Harry Potter audience can read Mark 10:32–45 through the lens of the Harry Potter novels, a lens which allows the reader to both transform and be transformed by the Markan text. This reading lens will highlight how Jesus acts to resist and subvert the role of tyrannical rule in the lives of his followers, much like the resistance and subversion seen in the story of Harry Potter.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 1, I will present the method to be used in this study. Chapter 2 will examine the social and political background of the first century in order to provide a framework that can be used to enrich today's readers' understanding of the context of the Markan story world. Chapter 3 will explore the themes of oppression and resistance in the Gospel of Mark as a whole through the lens of the Harry Potter literature. The focus of Chapter 4 will be an examination of Mark 10:32–45 through the Harry Potter lens, with particular emphasis on Harry Potter as a Christ-figure who is amplified in the person of Jesus as presented in Mark's Gospel. For these last two chapters, juxtaposing the two texts will be a key tool to facilitate the use of the popular culture lens and how it can be helpful for the Harry Potter audience. The concluding chapter will address issues of application and practical relevance that have arisen from the research.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY

The various methods available for biblical research can be seen as tools to be carefully selected and sharpened for use. In the present study, I will be using a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach. The key materials being examined in this study (one of the NT Gospels from the first century and a series of popular young adult speculative fiction from this century) cover a wide spectrum of contexts. There is also the twenty-first-century, the real world context of today's reader. In light of all this, an eclectic approach drawing from a variety of disciplines is quite appropriate. My posture will be that adopted by Edward Said—"to focus as much as possible on individual works, to read them first as great products of the creative or interpretative imagination, and then to show them as part of the relationship between culture and empire."[1] In essence, this is a reading strategy. The central feature of my methodology will be a hermeneutical exploration of how the Harry Potter novels can be used as a lens to read the Gospel of Mark, thus contributing to a transformation of both the reader and the text. The lens can be used to examine the literary elements of parody, irony, humour, and repetition to uncover resistance and subversion in the text of Mark 10:32–45, recognizing the important place this episode holds as a culmination of the theme of resistance within the Markan narrative. Most importantly, this lens can be instrumental in helping the Harry Potter audience to expand their horizons so that they can encounter Jesus in the Markan

[1] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxii.

Gospel. Examining the social and political backgrounds of the New Testament world will help to illuminate any resistance and subversion that are part of the power dynamics of the episode. The work of Walter Wink on resistance to the Domination System and James Scott's scholarship on hidden transcripts and resistance will be particularly useful in this regard. These methods will be informed by three methodological perspectives: postcolonial biblical criticism, empire studies, and feminist biblical criticism. Both postcolonial and empire studies will help to highlight the context of empire in the first century and in our time. Feminist hermeneutical approaches take into account not only gender, but also the intersectionality of power structures and domination.[2] Throughout this process, a popular culture analysis will help to draw out parallels of empire and tyranny from the Harry Potter literature.[3] This popular culture analysis will be centred on a robust theology of culture. A primary strategy for carrying out this popular culture analysis will be juxtaposing the Harry Potter text with the biblical text.[4] This analysis of the text will provide intertextual connections that can help the readers to expand their horizons. The goal is also to guide the Harry Potter audience through this process and to share the reading strategy with them. With this in mind, several pedagogical approaches will be outlined in the concluding chapter where a teacher or *guide* can help to engage the Harry Potter readers with the Markan Gospel story using the lens of a narrative which they already hold in a favourable view. All of this will facilitate an exploration of

[2] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 127.

[3] By popular culture analysis, I am referring to an analysis of the biblical text using the lens of a popular culture work (the Harry Potter series). This analysis will potentially bring the Gospel story to life for the Harry Potter audience.

[4] Roland Boer "juxtaposes biblical and other cultural texts and does so from the perspective of dialectical Marxism" (Boer, *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, 1–2; cf. Wainwright, "Introduction," 2). I will be doing the same thing but from a feminist and anti-imperial perspective.

the themes of power, dominance, and resistance in the world of Harry Potter which will help to highlight these same themes in the first-century world. These methodological perspectives and specific methods will therefore be useful for investigating the question of how empire and tyrannical rule are resisted in the scriptural text and how this can resonate with Harry Potter enthusiasts today and help to transform their reading of the Gospel of Mark. The focus is how the Harry Potter audience can experience the Markan story of Jesus so that it has an impact on them.

Before outlining my methods in greater detail, it will be helpful to acknowledge that the account related in Mark 10:32−45 does not exist on its own. It is part of the larger narrative of the Gospel as a whole. Sharyn Dowd expresses it this way: "The Gospel does not consist of discrete sections connected end to end, but of threads woven into a narrative 'tapestry'—of themes and motifs that resound and 'echo' again and again, of 'foreshadowings' and flashbacks that keep the audience on track as to where the story has been and where it is going."[5] Recognizing that the Gospel of Mark is one whole narrative will help to underscore where the Mark 10:32–45 episode fits within the Gospel narrative.[6] Relating this to the Harry Potter novels, the Mark 10 text and the Elder Wand account are culminations of core themes developed throughout the two narratives. The focus will therefore be on how the episode in Mark 10:32−45 fits into the narrative of Mark as a whole and how it is connected with recurring themes in the Gospel. Likewise, Harry Potter's laying aside of the Elder Wand is the culmination of

[5] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 2.

[6] In light of this, rather than referring to Mark 10:35−45 as a "pericope" which implies something that has been cut and pasted into the text, I will consider it an "episode" which is very much a part of the larger story of Mark's Gospel (Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 103; Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 4).

themes like self-sacrifice and forgoing ultimate power that are present throughout all seven novels and will therefore be considered within the context of the whole series.

Examining Power Structures and Resistance

Underlying Perspectives

The topic of this investigation (uncovering resistance in Mark 10:32–45 through the lens of the Harry Potter story) lends itself to be investigated using ideological criticism, with its emphasis on themes of power, subjugation, oppression, and empire.[7] Two of the three methodological perspectives I have chosen to inform my research (postcolonial criticism and feminist criticism) come under the umbrella of ideological criticism. The third (empire studies) is not considered ideological criticism. However, it has a focus on similar themes to feminist and postcolonial criticism—including empire, power dynamics, and oppression. All three perspectives are thus oriented towards the topic of power and resistance in Mark 10:32–45.

In addition to this focus on similar themes, there are several other ways that these three perspectives cohere with each other. There are connections between them historically. Shane Wood considers postcolonial criticism to be a key influencer of empire studies.[8] Jeremy Punt sees a benefit to combining some elements of empire studies with the postcolonial approach he takes.[9] The three perspectives also all lend themselves to an interdisciplinary approach, like the one being taken in this study.[10]

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[7] Pippin, "Ideological Criticisms," 267.

[8] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 36.

[9] Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation*, 133–34.

[10] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 126; Moore and Segovia, "Postcolonial Biblical Criticism," 9; Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 43. Wood acknowledges that, within this eclectic stance, empire studies has a focus on historical-critical methodology.

Moreover, because these perspectives all focus on power and a critique of empire, all three have at least some common tasks in terms of their approach to biblical interpretation. Stephen Moore observes that both postcolonial and empire studies, along with liberation hermeneutics, are concerned with "the task of disentangling the New Testament texts from the embrace of imperial Christianity."[11]

There are also a number of tensions that need to be recognized between these perspectives, beginning with the challenge of mapping out the complex relationships and boundaries between them. Moore and Fernando Segovia note that these boundaries are "highly permeable."[12] In terms of postcolonial and empire studies, there are different emphases. Empire studies emphasize the socio-historical context of the biblical text.[13] By definition, there is an emphasis on criticism in postcolonial criticism over empire studies.[14] Comparatively, postcolonial criticism goes into greater depth and is more sophisticated in terms of ideology and power dynamics.[15] Wood identifies two primary ways that postcolonial criticism tends to differ from empire studies: its emphases on reception history and on marginalized voices today.[16] However, he does find certain exceptions within empire studies that take into account today's marginalized voices, such as some of Horsley's work.[17] This is noteworthy for this study since reception and

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[11] Moore, "Empire of God," para. 9.

[12] Moore and Segovia, "Postcolonial Biblical Criticism," 8. They go on to note that, for those in the discipline of empire studies, this "mapping problem is further exacerbated by the fact that exceedingly few . . . evince any interest in affixing the label 'postcolonial' to their projects." Punt also acknowledges a challenge for describing and defining postcolonial studies (Punt, "On Articulating Marginalization," 467).

[13] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 42.

[14] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 38. This would also apply to feminist criticism.

[15] Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation*, 44.

[16] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 42. Empire studies instead has its emphasis on marginalized voices in the ancient world (Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 44).

[17] Moore and Segovia also find such examples within empire studies, including some works of Horsley, concerned with "keeping the ancient imperial contexts in tensive dialogue with the contemporary

hearing today's marginalized voices, especially in the Harry Potter audience, are important elements. All of this points to a somewhat greater use of postcolonial criticism in my work, although the advantages derived from empire studies are also in evidence.

Some further tensions between the two deserve consideration. Moore sees the need to navigate between the two risks of viewing the Gospel of Mark and other biblical texts "as unequivocal anti-imperial resistance literature" on the one hand and with "excessive suspicion" on the other (reading these texts as being "consistently compromised literature"). The implication is that empire studies is associated with the former.[18] This is a helpful tool for understanding the tensions that postcolonialism needs to map its way through. However, there also needs to be some nuancing—for example, in the word "unequivocal." It is probably more accurate to say that most in the empire studies camp would see the Gospel of Mark as robust resistance literature, but not unequivocally so, and that the target of that resistance is the Roman Empire. Moore also brings up another important question of whether Mark's Gospel is setting up its own empire, thus furthering the very imperial aims postcolonialism and empire studies seek to resist.[19] In addressing this question, the nature of this empire or kingdom (βασιλεία) is key. Is it materially different than the empire of Rome it offsets? Does it subvert, oppress, or marginalize? Does it offer a different way that features serving others and putting them first? Does it set up its own hierarchy or does it oppose hierarchy? Such questions will be central in this present endeavour.

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contexts in which the biblical texts are appropriated" (Moore and Segovia, "Postcolonial Biblical Criticism," 8).

[18] Moore, "Empire of God," para. 18.

[19] Moore, "Empire of God," para. 17.

There are also tensions between postcolonialism and feminism. Musa Dube challenges Western feminists to take into account postcolonial considerations in our world.[20] There is a need recognize intersectionality so that Eurocentric categories are not preferred.[21] Western feminists have often failed to oppose oppressive imperialist structures and practices.[22] Dube thus warns of the risk of the oppressed becoming the oppressors and the victims becoming the victimized.[23] She underscores the need for feminist biblical interpreters to mindfully adopt "decolonizing strategies.[24] In the same vein, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld highlights the value in identifying oneself as a "pro-postcolonial feminist"—one who acknowledges "global ownership of biblical texts by attempting to engage biblical interpretation across difficult dividing lines."[25] This is a way of bringing these two perspectives together and working through the tensions that exist so that oppression is resisted rather than exacerbated further.

In using the term "perspectives" I am intentionally distancing myself from referring to them as methods. For example, R. S. Sugirtharajah notes that postcolonial criticism is not so much a method as a "methodological category."[26] The three perspectives are also not being used here as broad, overarching theories that determine every step of the process. Rather, they are more of a backdrop and are useful in providing the methodological tools that will be used. They help to provide an amalgamation of several tools that come together to provide an interdisciplinary

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[20] Dube, "Rahab Says Hello to Judith," 55.
[21] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 24.
[22] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 26.
[23] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 20. She cites the book of Exodus in the Hebrew scriptures as an example of "former losers claiming power" (Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 51).
[24] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 43.
[25] Sakenfeld, "Whose Text Is It?," 11–12.
[26] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 12.

approach. The primary way these tools are provided by the perspectives is by pointing towards them. To illustrate, reception history is not exclusive to postcolonialism but postcolonial theory *highlights* how texts are received with respect to postcolonial concerns. Feminist criticism models and thereby points to an engagement with questions of power dynamics and oppression of the marginalized. The work that has been done by the proponents of these perspectives is also foundational for the work being done here. It is in the work that has been carried out in empire studies that it mainly contributes to this project. In particular, the work of empire studies proponents like Horsley and Carter is helpful in exploring the socio-historical context of the first century. Postcolonial theory also has great value in facilitating literary critical tools and reading strategies, a subject to which I now turn.

Concerning postcolonialism, Sugirtharajah observes, "In its reconsideration of colonialism and its aftermath, it draws on poststructuralism, Marxism, cultural studies, linguistics, and literary studies."[27] In essence, it is a "a critical reading strategy," the usefulness of which is unmistakable for this endeavour.[28] It requires an awareness that cultural texts are used both to impose and resist imperialism, which is contrapuntal reading.[29] Said states that this type of "contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded."[30] There

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[27] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 12.

[28] Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 3.

[29] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 47.

[30] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66–67. See Samuel who observes that Said's "'contrapuntal reading' strategy, takes into account of both processes, that of imperialism and of resistance to it, that of the visible and hidden, the manifest and latent, the dominant and marginalized ideas, institutions and voices in colonial discourses" (Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading,* 10). A contrapuntal reading is not synonymous with a resistant reading. However, in postcolonial approaches there is a definite element of resistance involved.

is an intent to ensure that the resistant voice is heard against the imperial voice. Contrapuntal reading—in effect reading in counterpoint with other ideologies or belief systems—is an important component of postcolonial criticism. In terms of postcolonial biblical interpretation, it is important to recognize the colonial context of the biblical texts.[31] Using the Harry Potter novels as a lens, the practice of a contrapuntal reading that incorporates resistance will facilitate a reading of Mark that uncovers the anti-colonial, anti-Empire elements in the text through the examination of literary devices such as irony and how these devices display resistance. A critical strategy will be to teach the Harry Potter readers how to read contrapuntally so that they can hear another voice, the voice of the good news story of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

Said defines "imperialism" as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory."[32] This certainly applies to first-century Palestine. For the purposes of this study, the words "dominating" and "ruling" in this definition will be significant. However, my understanding of imperialism and empire does not include "distant territory" as a *necessary* factor. An empire can tyrannize its own immediate territory. How the dominant culture relates to the minority culture, even in the *home territory*, is relevant for examining magic and muggle interactions in Harry Potter's world.[33]

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's work shows that feminist biblical criticism can make an important contribution to the topic of resistance and power structures. She expands on postcolonial criticism with her concept of "intersecting . . . structures of

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[31] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 91–92.
[32] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.
[33] *Muggle* refers to non-magical people in the Harry Potter literature.

dominance" which include not only gender divisions but all forms of marginalization.[34] She has coined the term "kyriarchy" to refer to such an intersecting structure of dominance, recognizing that the dominations of empire go beyond "*patriarchy*, which is often understood in terms of binary gender dualism."[35] A feminist critical approach also takes care to find those who are invisible and hidden and to hear voices that are silent within the biblical text and then to make them visible and heard.[36] Wood defines empire studies as a discipline that "investigates subject texts for interactions with the dominant imperial message . . . [attempting] to answer the question, 'How does the biblical text interact with the empire?'"[37] Resistance to unjust imperial powers is a common theme in both feminist biblical criticism and empire studies.[38] Although there are differences in the approaches that postcolonial, feminist, and empire scholars take, there is a common theme among them—they all emphasize domination that is comparable to imperial forces and resistance to it. In fact, all of the methods used for this study will be carried out from the perspective of those who have been oppressed and dominated and whose voices have been silenced by empire.[39] This will be useful in looking for evidence of resistance to such tyrranical domination in the text.

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[34] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 28; cf. 13–14.

[35] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 13–14. Emphasis in original. Scott Spencer notes that, while feminist biblical criticism is not concerned only with women in the Bible, it does seek to promote their interests and to reveal how the Bible has historically been mishandled with respect to women (Spencer, "Feminist Criticism," 289).

[36] Polaski, *Feminist Introduction*, 5.

[37] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 56.

[38] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 8–9, 59; Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 34, 43–44, 54.

[39] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 31, 44.

The Social and Historical Context of Power

Understanding the setting of Mark's story is related to understanding the context of the time and place when it was written. This helps illuminate the world in which both the characters and the original audience lived. It thus overlaps with social-scientific criticism. Rhoads sees the benefit of using "social and cultural patterns from the first century as a basis for understanding Mark's story" just as having a background in the culture and language of the sixteenth century would help to understand Shakespeare's plays.[40] It is therefore beneficial to use literary strategies that will highlight the interaction between the text of Mark 10:32–45 and its social, political, and cultural context.[41] Recognizing that this is a biblical text with "strong political overtones" will be crucial for a study where power structures and resistance to power are a central focus.[42] Within the broader category of social-scientific criticism, I will be doing a social description of the first century in order to uncover some of the relevant social and political context, particularly in the areas of oppression and resistance.

In examining power structures, it will be useful to recognize the types of power being used both in the Harry Potter literature and in the Gospel of Mark. Two overarching categories of power will be the focus here. Oppressive or tyrannical power can be understood in terms of exploitation. Against this, empowerment is a positive power used for the sake of others to build them up. I will build a picture of coercive, tyrannical power in the Harry Potter novels as well as exploring resistance to this tyranny. Scott Bartchy refers to this type of tyrannical power as "absolute power" and

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[40] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 6. See also Tannehill, whose narrative critical approach "is not opposed to historical research" (Tannehill, "Gospel of Mark," 60).

[41] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 14.

[42] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So,* 151.

associates it with male dominance.[43] He also links it to Roman law and the concept of *patria potestas*.[44] Schüssler Fiorenza distinguishes between oppressive power ("power over") and creative, enriching power which cultivates "capacity, energy, and potential" ("power to"). She calls them "*potestas*" and "*potentia*" respectively. It is noteworthy for the purposes of this study that she identifies oppressive power or *potestas* as "the power of empire."[45] I will therefore be looking at both of these kinds of power in the context of the first-century world of the Gospel of Mark. I will explore in which ways the Roman Empire was oppressive and tyrannical, as well as how this may have led to resistance against such oppression. It will also be important to investigate positive uses of power, such as empowerment of others, in the Harry Potter story. Guiding the Harry Potter audience to use the analysis of power in the series as a lens to explore what Jesus is saying about both negative and positive power in Mark 10:42–45 will be key to this process.

Schüssler Fiorenza notes that there are two points of contact when interpreting the Bible's connection with empire: the Roman imperial context of the biblical world and the context of empire in our contemporary world.[46] Warren Carter describes the Roman Empire as one where domination was celebrated,[47] which is significant since this empire is the "pervasive context" of the New Testament.[48] Horsley's work will be helpful in illuminating the social and political context of the Roman Empire in the first

[43] Bartchy, "Power, Submission," 52, 72, 80.
[44] Bartchy, "Power, Submission," 71.
[45] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 58. On the concepts of "power to" and "power over" see Hanna Pitkin (Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 276–77).
[46] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 1, 56.
[47] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 8.
[48] Carter, *Roman Empire*, ix.

century. He lays out what it meant for the Galilean and Judean people to be subjugated under Roman imperial rule in the first century, the effects of which included oppression, impoverishment, enslavement, slaughter, terrorism, and executions.[49]

Empire studies, postcolonial biblical criticism, and feminist biblical criticism can assist us in discovering how questions of politics and power structures illuminate the Markan context. This is because of commonalities in the political structures of Roman imperialism, European colonialism, and other contemporary imperial systems.[50]

Categories of Oppression

Oppression is a theme that will be examined closely in both the Harry Potter and Markan contexts so it will be helpful to consider categories of oppression. In defining oppression, Katherine van Wormer observes that it is generally characterized by "inhumane or degrading treatment of a group or individual based on some defining characteristic." She also notes that it is directed toward such a group or individual who is denied privileges and advantages given to privileged groups.[51] Iris Marion Young defines oppression as "structured phenomena that immobilize or reduce a group."[52] She outlines five types of oppression. Exploitation involves appropriating "the product of the labor of others" and is undergirded by a system of unequal power where those who have less do the work to benefit those who have more.[53] The second type of oppression is marginalization. Young, writing from a Marxist and feminist perspective, focuses here

[49] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 13–34.
[50] However, there are noteworthy differences as well.
[51] Van Wormer, *Confronting Oppression*, 7.
[52] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 93.
[53] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 95–96.

on those who are denied or unable to find employment for one reason or another. However, she also recognizes that there are other types of marginalization such as unequal citizenship as well as a lack of access to certain freedoms and rights that are given to other persons.[54] This would include unequal access to government services and institutions such as health care, land rights, or marriage. Since this is concerning marginalized groups, there is a tendency within societies to not consider it as much of a problem when they have lack of access to these rights as when non-marginalized groups face the potential of similar deficiencies. I would add that marginalization prevents the *full* participation of certain groups in all aspects of society. The third type of oppression is powerlessness which involves a lack of autonomy and agency resulting from exploitation by the powerful. Young describes a "structure of exploitation" in which the powerful have their very power from exploiting others.[55]

Cultural imperialism is the fourth category of oppression identified by Young. She describes a society characterized by cultural imperialism as, at the same time, making a group invisible as well as categorizing them as "the Other." This paradox of conferring both stereotype and invisibility on those deemed Other comes about through establishing the culture and experiences of the privileged group as the norm.[56] This privileged group is considered the standard of humanity allowing for the erasure of the Other and thereby endowing them with a lesser humanity, a brand of inferiority. Young observes that those who are culturally imperialized "express their specific group experiences and interpretations of the world to one another, developing and perpetuating

[54] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 98.
[55] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 99.
[56] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 100.

their own culture. Double consciousness, then, occurs because one finds one's being defined by two cultures: a dominant and a subordinate culture."[57] This describes what is happening in hidden transcripts.

The final type of oppression is violence. Oppressive violence is systematic and directed at a particular group or groups. It is considered legitimate or justified by the oppressor. Those who experience such oppressive violence "live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person."[58] It is also worth mentioning at this point that oppressed peoples also sometimes respond to their oppression with violence.

The Power Dynamics of Resistance and Hidden Transcripts

There is a historical invisibility of subordinate groups which can make it difficult to find evidence of resistance. This is particularly true of first-century Palestinian history. Furthermore, this historical invisibility is heightened by the fact that much of the resistance by such groups is hidden. However, this also provides some clues as to what to look for. Resistance is less likely to be obvious and clearly laid out. It is more likely to be carried out with certain elements of disguise. These elements of disguise can then point toward the resistant behaviour.

I will rely significantly on the work of Wink and Scott for understanding how resistance works in different contexts of empire. In Wink's understanding, there is a

[57] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 101.
[58] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 102.

pronounced interplay between power dynamics and the concepts of dominance and resistance. He does not see power as a purely negative entity. To him the Powers are originally good but have become "fallen" and need redeeming.[59] Wink discusses resistance to oppressive powers in terms of "the Domination System." He defines the Domination System as "an entire network of Powers . . . integrated around idolatrous values" including delusion.[60] He suggests the approach to resistance advanced by Jesus is two-pronged, involving first an unmasking of those who oppress to reveal their cruelty and injustice.[61] This is closely related to the second means of resistance, engaging the Domination System which involves standing up to those who use humiliation to oppress others. However, Wink insists that this resistance, while standing its ground, must not be violent or hateful. One of the deceptive myths of the Domination System is that "Violence is redemptive"—that it is the only effective approach to dealing with enemies.[62] Here it is worthwhile mentioning that outright rebellion is not the only type of resistance. Other types not only exist but are commonly used in daily life.[63] Wink maintains that, in contrast to the alternatives of "fight or flight," Jesus promotes "a third way: nonviolent direct action."[64] This endeavour will seek to uncover examples of resistance throughout Mark's Gospel, especially in 10:32–45, including nonviolent direct action.

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[59] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 10.

[60] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 9. He also describes the Domination System as "existence robbed of its authenticity by the imposition of domination." (Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 62).

[61] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 102, 179.

[62] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 95.

[63] Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 54.

[64] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 175; cf. 172.

Wink sees unmasking as a necessary precursor to engaging oppressive Powers. Unmasking involves recognizing the Powers for what they are so that they can be confronted and resisted effectively. This needs to be done because these Powers have become distorted from their original purpose—what they were created by God to be. It therefore involves uncovering what has developed into "the delusional system."[65] Unmasking also gives people the potential for freedom and agency; since they are able to see the Powers for what they are, they are better able to make informed choices for or against them.[66]

Engaging the Domination System involves standing up to those who use humiliation to oppress others. This power to humiliate is resisted by undercutting it—by taking away or denying someone the power to humiliate you. Lampooning, ridiculing, irony, and parody are examples of how such resistance can be accomplished. Essentially, these are used to undignify one's opponent or oppressor. Wink states that these approaches "break the cycle of humiliation with humor and even ridicule, exposing the injustice of the System."[67]

The concept of hidden transcripts will be key for understanding how resistance operates in the Gospel of Mark. For James Scott, a hidden transcript is what occurs offstage away from the watchful eye of those who hold power—"a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."[68] He proposes that a hidden transcript is "an acting out in fantasy" or sometimes in secret practice. It allows those who are dominated

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[65] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 102. See also *Unmasking the Powers*, 173.

[66] Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 7.

[67] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 185. Wink argues that this is essentially what Jesus is outlining in Matt 5:38–42 in his instructions to his followers to turn the other cheek or give away their undergarments (Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 175–86).

[68] Scott, *Domination*, xii.

to find a voice for their anger and frustration.[69] A particular environment is required to cultivate hidden transcripts—a safe space where people experience the freedom to express what they would feel constrained to do in other locations. However, these safe spaces do not necessitate "any physical distance from the dominant so long as linguistic codes, dialects, and gestures" which are incomprehensible to the dominant are used. These circumstances provide a virtual distance.[70] A colourful example of a hidden transcript is seen in the following Ethiopian proverb: "*When the great lord passes the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts*."[71] Those who are tyrannized or oppressed can thus make use of opportunities to express themselves in such a way that the "great lord" is none the wiser.

In contrast to these hidden transcripts is the public transcript which describes what occurs out in the open between those with power and those that are subordinate to them.[72] There is a desire to maintain a certain image for the public transcript, for both the dominated and the dominators. There are various reasons for this. Issues such as safety and risk aversion for the subordinate come into play here. For the dominant, a common objective is to maintain compliance amongst their subordinates.

It is rare and requires particular historical circumstances for subordinate groups to act openly on their thoughts of resistance and/or rebellion.[73] This is why resistance

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[69] Scott, *Domination*, 37–38. Scott also recognizes that those who dominate usually have their *own* hidden transcripts—the things they do not wish to acknowledge publicly (Scott, *Domination*, 4).

[70] Scott, *Domination*, 120–21. Horsley refers to these safe environments as "specially sequestered sites" (Horsley, "Politics of Disguise," 69). Scott proposes that we consider "rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theater of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct" (Scott, *Domination*, xiii).

[71] Scott, *Domination*, v. Emphasis in original.

[72] Scott, *Domination*, 2.

[73] Scott, *Domination*, 102.

often remains hidden. However, resistance can move into the public sphere with an anonymous stance or some element of disguise.[74] In such situations there is often a middle step or transitional phase between the fully hidden transcript and the fully open challenge to the dominant powers. Scott distinguishes two types of this "open declaration of defiance" which he refers to as "raw" and "cooked." The cooked type of transcript tends to be more well-developed and involves being initially exposed to nurturing and nuancing within a rich and fruitful hidden transcript environment.[75] Scott explores how this kind of resistance can eventually contribute to the undermining of an oppressive, tyrannical system. Considering Scott is not a biblical scholar, it is noteworthy that he speaks of a scenario hoped for by subjected people: "a world turned upside down . . . in which the last shall be first and the first last."[76] Horsley, responding to Scott, sees the hidden transcript of Mark 10 as "a significant form of political resistance" toward Rome, which grew into a bolder, public expression of resistance later in the Gospel.[77] Together, the work of Wink and Scott will add a compelling element to this research, helping to show how the type of resistance Jesus is showing in Mark 10 is especially subversive and effective, even though it is not public and is sometimes in the form of ironic and even ambiguous communication. Additionally, a pattern of resistance enacted by Jesus throughout the Gospel will be demonstrated. The whole Gospel will be mined for instances of resistance. Through juxtaposing Mark's Gospel with the Harry Potter novels this pattern of resistance can be drawn out more effectively for the Harry Potter audience. This can help them to see Jesus as a strong and compelling resister. I

[74] Scott, *Domination*, 18–19; Horsley, "Politics of Disguise," 69.
[75] Scott, *Domination*, 216.
[76] Scott, *Domination*, 80; cf. 42.
[77] Horsley, "Introduction," 21–22.

will therefore look for examples of hidden transcripts of resistance in both the Markan and Harry Potter literature, as well as bolder, more public forms of resistance.

Power Dynamics in the Harry Potter Series

In terms of the political foundations of popular literature, in Bethany Barratt's analysis of the Harry Potter novels she addresses some key issues including the following: understanding the use of power;[78] justice and complicity in injustice;[79] treatment of the marginalized;[80] oppressive tyranny.[81] These are issues that will be relevant to explore in the Gospel of Mark through the lens of the Harry Potter novels. These issues speak contrapuntally to empire, thus transforming the reading into "an act of resistance, whereby cultural productions are consistently tied by the reader to social, historical, and political contexts."[82] The attribute of resistance brings together the biblical text and the Harry Potter literature. I will therefore investigate how these two worlds—the Harry Potter world and the first-century Markan world —resist and subvert their respective empires. This will illuminate for the Harry Potter reader how the context in which the Markan story was written resonates with the Harry Potter world.

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[78] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 1.
[79] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 46–52.
[80] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 63–65.
[81] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 46, 97. See Granger on prejudice and oppression in the Harry Potter books (Granger, *Looking for God*, 55–59).
[82] Frecerro, *Popular Culture*, 16.

Literary Devices

In examining the literary elements of Mark 10:32–45 I will be using some of the tools of literary criticism.[83] The main literary devices I will examine are repetitive devices, parody, irony, and humour. Both repetition and irony come under the category of "language play"[84] and both are considered stylistic features.[85] One of the main reasons to look at these devices is that they can help demonstrate to the Harry Potter audience that the Gospel of Mark is a captivating story about an engaging character, Jesus. The devices to be examined are not the only features that can uncover the literary nature of the Gospel.[86] However, they are key elements for this particular episode of the Gospel narrative. Another purpose for examining repetition parody, irony, and humour in the Harry Potter novels and in Mark's Gospel is to show how these elements influence and transform the reader. They have a rhetorical function which can highlight certain themes, like oppression and resistance, that are of interest to the Harry Potter audience and can help attach them to the Markan story of Jesus. The reader is not an empty vessel in this process, however, but has agency and is invited to engage with the text.[87] Many Harry Potter readers will not expect to find things like irony and humour in Mark's Gospel so it would be beneficial to guide them to look for such features and provide

[83] Narrative criticism is a type of literary criticism and some of the tools I will be using come under the category of narrative criticism. However, I will not be doing a full narrative critical analysis using all the elements of such a framework. See, for example, Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 103−5.

[84] Westfall, "Narrative Criticism," 237−38.

[85] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 168–69.

[86] Some, such as plot, setting, and character, may at times shine through in this work.

[87] "Rather than viewing irony as a property resident within the *text*, scholars now recognize irony as somehow resident within the reaction of the reader" (Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, x).

cues of what to look for.[88] In particular, I will be looking at how these features are at play in Mark 10:32–45 and how the story of Harry Potter can illuminate this process for the reader.

Repetition

Although repetition has sometimes been said to weaken a humorous effect, it can actually amplify and enhance the humour if the narrative is of greater length.[89] This is relevant for the Gospel of Mark where repetition is an important literary feature.[90] Repetition in Mark has the potential to underscore the message. According to Rhoads et al., the diversity seen in the use of repetitive devices helps to "advance the plot and amplify themes in Mark's narrative design."[91] Robert Alter makes the following observation: "What most distinguishes repetition in biblical narrative is the explicitness and formality with which it is generally employed."[92] Alter sets out a model ("a scale of repetitive structuring and focusing devices") which is useful in identifying repetitive features in biblical narrative.[93] It should be noted that, although Alter focuses on Old Testament narratives, the principles also apply quite well to the narrative in the Gospels. The five repetitive devices he outlines are: *Leitwort*, motif, theme, sequence of actions,

[88] The aim is to teach readers to have open eyes for certain elements in the text. They are thus using the popular culture lens of the Harry Potter books and the elements they are familiar with there to discover those same elements in the Gospel text.

[89] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 9n36.

[90] Although I refer to it as a "literary" feature, repetition would have been a vital component of the original *oral* nature of Mark's Gospel. The repeating of sounds and ideas would have helped the performance of the narrative to be more memorable for the audience (Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 69–70).

[91] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 48.

[92] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 121.

[93] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 119.

and type-scene.[94] A *Leitwort* involves "abundant repetition" of a word or root of a word in a text or series of texts.[95] Rhoads et al. refer to *Leitwörter* as "verbal threads."[96] Repetition of *Leitwörter* will help to show how Jesus draws attention to the words of James and John but puts a twist on them. A motif can be defined as the recurrence of an "image, sensory quality, action, or object . . . through a particular narrative."[97] An example is the journey motif that provides the context for the Mark 10 episode which will be framed by the quest taken by Harry Potter and his friends in the last book of the series. A theme is a concept that stands as "part of the value-system of the narrative" and is also demonstrated through repeated patterns.[98] Repetition within the passage and the Gospel as a whole will help to highlight the theme of resistance to the human imperial system. A "progressive series of three episodes"[99] or a sequence of actions involves a pattern of three repeated elements or events which are intensified with each successive occurrence.[100] This will be useful for examining the role of the passion predictions in highlighting the prominence of this episode. A type-scene is an episode consisting of a series of motifs which occurs at a key point in the narrative and consists of conventions that are familiar to the audience.[101] The episode where James and John come to Jesus will be examined using both *Leitwörter* and type scene. I will thus use these repetitive devices to analyze the Mark 10:32−45 episode and underscore repeated elements within the narrative, including power relations and resistance. This will also

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[94] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 119–21.
[95] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 119–20; cf. 116–17.
[96] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 48.
[97] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120.
[98] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120.
[99] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 54.
[100] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120.
[101] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 59, 121. Rhoads et al. define them as "[s]imilar episodes repeated with variation (Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 51).

help to place it within the narrative as a whole. By showing how these repetitive devices are also used in the Harry Potter narrative, this will help to illuminate their function within the Gospel of Mark.

Parody and Irony

Robert Chambers describes parody as a juxtaposition of differing materials. The result of this "beside-or-against doubling up . . . [is] to create confounding, ambiguous contrasts." Boundaries between the paired items are absent or broken down. The relationship between the two items is characterized by complexity and "sometimes bewildering dualism."[102]

Chambers identifies three types of parody. "[W]ith parodic banging, the contrasted material will appear to be distinctly and directly at odds. With parodic binding, the contrasts, despite their lack of affinity, will seem to be locked together. And, with parodic blending, the dissimilarities will still be evident, but the material will appear to be thoroughly and smoothly married."[103] Parody, and *particularly* parodic banging, is closely associated with humour.[104] Chambers observes that "its most common application, exponentially so, is in the orchestration of comedy, irony, and satire."[105] Parodic banging also involves change and dissonance.[106] Parody functions to communicate as well as bringing about innovation and transformation.[107] It can be useful both for those with radical or revolutionary objectives as well as those who want

[102] Chambers, *Parody*, 4.
[103] Chambers, *Parody*, 7.
[104] Chambers, *Parody*, 72–75, 81.
[105] Chambers, *Parody*, 189.
[106] Chambers, *Parody*, 68.
[107] Chambers, *Parody*, 189, 191.

to maintain the status quo.[108] Postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha sees an ambivalence in cultural mimicry in that its flip side is mockery and parody. The colonized are expected to mimic the colonizers but add a dash of parody in order to secretly mock them. These would be subversive acts toward the colonizers.[109] An examination of parody in the Mark 10 episode through the lens of the Harry Potter works would therefore be an appropriate choice for a methodological tool.

I suggest that irony is itself a type of parody, as defined by Chambers. In any case, they are closely connected. Chambers notes that they are often both operating in the same situation, "with the irony emerging from the underlying parody."[110] According to Camery-Hoggatt, the two main components of irony are the text and the underlying subtext, where the narrative elements prompt the audience to discover "deeper significances" below the text's surface.[111] He describes the text and subtext as being diametrically opposed, a dissonance which fits with the definition of parodic banging.[112] In defining irony, D. C. Muecke outlines three basic elements: (1) Irony is "double-layered" and manifests itself at two levels—how circumstances are understood by the victim or target of the irony, or presented or evoked by the ironist if there is one, and how they are understood by the audience or observer; (2) irony necessarily involves opposition or tension between these two levels—some sort of incongruity, contradiction, or inconsistency; (3) irony involves a sense of ignorance or unawareness in one of the parties; either the target of the irony is not aware that there is a true situation at odds

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[108] Chambers, *Parody*, 160.
[109] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 85–88. See also Wood, "Origins of Empire Studies," 46.
[110] Chambers, *Parody*, 129.
[111] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 1.
[112] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 2.

with their perception or the ironist pretends such an ignorance.[113] Verbal irony involves the speaker saying something but meaning quite the opposite. It can involve sarcasm. Dramatic irony denotes a situation where a character unwittingly believes or expects something to be true or going to happen and this is not the case; there is a discrepancy between what is believed and what is real.[114] The incongruity of irony can play an important role in challenging readers to look deeper. Two elements, the text and subtext, are at odds with each other. This has the potential to produce a strong reaction. It can challenge the reader to look beyond the text to the subtext underneath and there find something meaningful.[115] Camery-Hoggatt suggests that Mark uses irony and "narrative dissonance" ideologically to invite the audience to consider a particular worldview. This therefore has a potentially powerful effect on those who hear the message of the Gospel of Mark.[116] Irony encourages the reader to look beneath the surface to discover an unmasked reality underneath. When this happens, there is a "moment of recognition, an awareness of the disparity between appearance and reality."[117] This can be valuable for introducing Harry Potter readers to new horizons.

On the other side of the coin, Jonathan Swift saw irony and the related concept of satire *not* as delving beneath the surface to find truth but rather allowing for it to stay hidden for certain purposes. "Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind

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[113] Muecke, *Compass of Irony*, 19–20; Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 61. Muecke notes one exception to the last point: "In sarcasm or in very overt irony the ironist does not pretend to be unaware of his real meaning and his victim is immediately aware of it" (Muecke, *Compass of Irony*, 20).

[114] Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 51; Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 30.

[115] Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 1.

[116] Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 180.

[117] Wolfe, "In Defense of Irony," para. 5. Wolfe, it is interesting to note, proposes that "Jesus is the supreme ironist" (Wolfe, "In Defense of Irony," para. 9).

reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it."[118] This acts as a type of hidden transcript whereby people can be parodied without their awareness. I believe that, paradoxically, both can be true. Irony can both reveal and conceal. It can therefore be useful for both creating and inspiring resistance.

Dramatic irony provides an example of how literary devices can help uncover dominance and resistance in the Markan narrative. For instance, there is dramatic irony in the Harry Potter books, particularly in relation to the character Voldemort who is portrayed throughout as someone who never really gets it, much like the disciples are portrayed in Mark.[119] This also sheds light on the dramatic irony in the situation where James and John come to Jesus and have a different understanding of what it means to be on Jesus' right and left than he does (Mark 10:37–40).[120] A key question here will be how this dramatic irony is used to turn the appeal of James and John for privilege, honour, and dominance "on its head."[121] The potential verbal irony in the word δοκοῦντες in Mark 10:42 is of interest.[122] I suggest Jesus is being intentionally ironic and sarcastic in his use of the word, essentially ridiculing those who *appear* to have power. Ridicule will be considered as a form of resistance in this passage, especially using the work of Wink, and demonstrating similarities with how resistance and ridicule are used in Harry Potter.

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[118] Swift, "Battle of the Books," 1:125. In response to this observation by Swift, John Granger asks, in the context of the Harry Potter books: "What better place could there be, then, than in satirical fiction to conceal criticism of those in power?" (Granger, *Harry Potter's Bookshelf*, 149).

[119] This obliviousness comes to a climax in the final confrontation between Harry and Voldemort (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 737–44).

[120] "Their question therefore has a secondary significance they cannot have intended" (Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161).

[121] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 100.

[122] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 120–27, 187, 197, 207.

Non sequiturs can be a type of logical fallacy but can also be used in a literary or other context for disruptive or comedic purposes. Chambers mentions "a crushing non sequitur" as an example of humorous parodic banging.[123] Non sequiturs can therefore be thematic or logical; in either of these ways something is not following on from what has preceded.[124] I will investigate a thematic non-sequitur in Mark 10:32–45, enacted by the characters James and John, and how its humour is used by the Markan composer.[125]

Humour

It may seem odd to look at humour and irony in a passage that deals with such serious issues as oppression, torture, self-sacrifice, and death. However, this may actually be the point. The contrast between the seriousness of what Jesus is trying to convey to his followers and their, to say the least, inappropriate response is the source of much of the irony and dark humour. The concept of parodic banging exemplifies this well, in that the harsh reality of the situation is confronted with a humorous response. Humour and irony are closely related but are not the same thing. Irony does not have to be humorous. However, at least in certain situations, it can be more effective if it does have a comedic element.

Iverson observes that there are very few scholars who recognize the humour in the Bible or, specifically, in the Gospel of Mark.[126] However, he sees humour playing a

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[123] Chambers, *Parody*, 75.
[124] Young, *Studying English Literature*, 113.
[125] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 110.
[126] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 5. With respect to the passage he looks at in his article (Mark 8:14–21), he mentions Camery-Hoggatt as one of those who focuses on the irony of the situation without considering what role humour has to play (Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 12; cf. Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*), whereas Tolbert is one of the rare scholars who *does* recognize the humour in the account (Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 11n47; cf. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 102). I would note that Camery-Hoggatt *does* find some comedic elements in another

key role in Mark 8:14–21, as well as in the Gospel as a whole.[127] According to Iverson, what is happening in this incident is that two realities or "scripts" are coming up against each other: "what the disciples should have understood and what they actually perceived."[128] The humour in the situation draws the audience in. Having been lured "into the comedic interlude" by the storyteller, there is then a reversal which permits the hearers of the story to experience the story through the eyes and ears of the disciples. This then enables the audience to hear the words of Jesus more distinctly, as if they were spoken directly to them.[129] In effect, they are disarmed by laughing and this (ironically) puts them in a frame of mind to listen to more serious communication from Jesus.[130] The comedy in the episode thus acts rhetorically to allow the audience to accept the words of Jesus. The Markan storyteller uses humour as "a rhetorical and redemptive tool" and a way for the audience to hear the words of Jesus in a more powerful and compelling way.[131] Humour functions in Mark 10:32–45 in a manner similar to what Iverson has described for Mark 8:14–21. I will therefore explore how this process works to highlight

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episode (Mark 10:35–40), but cautions against "seeing only humor" there (Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161). Myers is another who finds humour in the Gospel of Mark, including "the image of a messianic claimant residing at the house of a leper (14:3) or being bested in verbal debate by a gentile woman (7:29) . . . He makes a joke about the rich, declaring that it is as hard for them to be saved as for a 'camel to go through the eye of a needle' (10:25)—and summarily turns the assumed relationship between piety, wealth, and blessing on its head!" (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 96).

[127] This is the episode where Jesus and the disciples are in a boat, he warns them about the yeast of the Pharisees, and they make some odd comments about not having any bread even though they do have one loaf.

[128] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 7, 11. His interaction with the concept of scripts is based on Victor Raskin who identifies two defining characteristics of a humorous text: it has two separate but interrelating scripts and these scripts are in some way incongruous or opposite (Raskin, "Script-Based Theories," 110–11). This is similar to what happens with parodic banging.

[129] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 17. Of course, this is all in the context of a performance in front of an audience, which is how many would have experienced the Gospel in the first century (Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 15–17). There is evidence that Mark's narrative is characterized by oral storytelling methods (Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 3). As such, it is quite likely it was presented orally to its first audiences and that this "oral gospel tradition" continued on even after the Gospel was in written form (Dunn, *Oral Gospel Tradition*, 74).

[130] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 17–18.

[131] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 19.

the words of Jesus there and show how this can be meaningful for the Harry Potter audience, who likely have an affinity for the humorous.

In addition to examining the humour of the Weasley twins,[132] I will look at certain incidents more closely in relation to Mark 10:32–45, including the humorous treatment of Dolores Umbridge and Voldemort.[133] The focus will be on how the humour is used to communicate certain messages about oppression and resistance. Related to this, it helps to unmask these characters and show them for who they are. Humour tends to be more obvious in popular culture than the Bible.[134] Juxtaposing popular and biblical texts in terms of humour has the potential to therefore be quite useful. Engaging with the humour in popular culture works can be a bridge towards finding humour in biblical writings and then observing how that humour is used to communicate ideas more effectively. This will be instrumental for engaging positively with the Harry Potter audience and inspiring a more favourable view of the Gospel story and the person of Jesus.

Parody, Irony, Humour, and Inversion as Part of Contrapuntal Reading

With the juxtaposition of one thing against another, parody and irony are related to the concept of symbolic inversion. Barbara Babcock defines symbolic inversion as something that "inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms be they linguistic,

[132] See Chapter 3, where this will be explored in the context of resistance and oppression in the Harry Potter books and the Gospel of Mark as a whole.

[133] See Chapter 4.

[134] As already noted, scholars who write about humour in the Bible are scarce.

literary or artistic, religious, or social and political."[135] Something is reversed or turned on its head. Symbolic inversion involves an intentional challenging of boundaries.[136] Humour is frequently an element. The reversal or switching often occurs in an unexpected manner that has a comic effect.[137]

Symbolic inversion, portrayed through parody and irony, can also involve unmasking. Mikhail Bakhtin describes how festivals like Carnival and those related to the change of seasons enacted "a reversal of the hierarchic levels [where] the jester was proclaimed king."[138] This was done in a comedic manner but one that also addressed serious social inequities. These festivals not only allowed for the performance of resistance against the status quo but also provided hope for a new kind of world—one that embraced justice and egalitarian principles. They embody the kind of resistance I hope to uncover in Mark 10:32–45 on behalf of Harry Potter readers.

David Kunzle investigates how symbolic inversion is present in old broadsheets over several centuries depicting a "World Upside Down (WUD)" theme where roles are reversed and hierarchies are inverted for a variety of purposes.[139] This phenomenon is particularly relevant for this study since these broadsheets were an important element of popular culture. One of the purposes for which the WUD theme was well-suited was to allow for the expression of subversive and resistant sentiments towards the status quo, including those in power.[140] Often this could be done in a way that would fly under the

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[135] Babcock, "Introduction," 14.
[136] Babcock, "Introduction," 27.
[137] Babcock, "Introduction," 17.
[138] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 81. See also Comber, "Torn Between Two Kingdoms," 34–35.
[139] Kunzle, "World Upside Down," 39–40.
[140] Kunzle, "World Upside Down," 40. Kunzle also notes two instances of the WUD theme in the Bible: Jesus engaging with the teachers in the temple in a role reversal (Luke 2:46–47) and animals in peaceful relationships with their natural predators in Isaiah 11:6–8 (Kunzle, "World Upside Down," 50,

radar of those higher up in the hierarchy who were being targeted in the reversal in the form of hidden transcripts. In fact, these broadsheets had a wide audience and were enjoyed for their humour even by those who did have higher status.[141]

Kunzle comments on the effectiveness of these works that have a theme of inversion: "Revolution appears disarmed by playfulness, the playful bears the seed of revolution… The imaginative capacity to reverse, conceptually, role relationships and create incongruities out of contrary forms, represents, when wielded by essentially powerless people, an ever-present threat to, and indeed a bid for power over, the real world 'order,' which is really the disorder of injustice."[142] There is certainly scope for a resistant approach using the theme of symbolic inversion. A contrapuntal reading, in effect, turns the world upside down. It can either discover parody and irony within the text, pushing against a particular ideology, or it can be used to push against the ideology within the text. Both the Harry Potter narrative and the Gospel of Mark have rich potential in terms of the theme of inversion and are therefore appropriate objects for a contrapuntal reading. To consider this with respect to the process of transformation, resistant reading is associated with a reader's willingness to revise expectations and to reconsider established understandings of the text. One way this can be done is to look for instances of symbolic inversion within the text.

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60). James Scott notes that these broadsheets were "nested in a popular culture brimming over with images of reversal (Scott, *Domination*, 167).

[141] Kunzle observes that the ambivalent nature of the WUD theme allowed "those satisfied with the existing or traditional social order to see the theme as a mockery of the idea of changing that order around, and at the same time, those dissatisfied with that order to see the theme as mocking it in its present, perverted state (Kunzle, "World Upside Down," 82).

[142] Kunzle, "World Upside Down," 89.

An awareness of how parody, irony, humour, and repetition operate can thus help to achieve a contrapuntal and resistant reading. This is because these elements can push against a particular version of reality. Since I will be doing a liberative reading of Mark 10:32–45 through the lens of Harry Potter, I expect to find ways that these literary features will uncover the resistance in the text.

Hermeneutics and Popular Culture Analysis

In order to explore how readers engage with texts, it is helpful to look at the hermeneutical process. According to Thiselton, hermeneutics is concerned with "how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or in a context of life different from our own."[143] Since hermeneutics involves how we read, it includes a consideration of what we bring to the text. One way of understanding this is as a lens which colours how we read the text. Everyone comes to a text with a bias or biases. This, in itself, is not problematic. There is, however, a difficulty if people do not acknowledge they have biases or assumptions. An important interest of hermeneutics is the means and conditions by which texts are transformed. In Thiselton's concept of transforming texts, the biblical text transforms and shapes the readers and the readers in turn shape the text. They have the potential to "endow texts with new life in the context of new situations."[144] This kind of transformational reading can happen when two horizons—the horizon of the reader and the horizon of the text—"engage and

[143] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 1, 3–4; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 2.

[144] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 31. This is the way that I will be considering the concept of transforming texts with regard to this study. I also propose that the "new situations" can encompass the particular lens that is being used to read a text.

interact."[145] Hans-Georg Gadamer defines a horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."[146] He also notes the possibility of expanding one's horizons.

Thiselton prefers the expression "*horizon of expectation*" over the term "presuppositions" that Rudolf Bultmann uses. [147] Thiselton underscores that horizons of expectation include assumptions that readers possess which they need to be willing to revise. He also cautions that readers may not be aware of everything in their horizon of expectation. The idea of the background that a reader brings to the experience of reading and, indeed, to understanding anything that is communicated, is helpful. Concerning this background, John Searle notes that the understanding that someone has about what is communicated is much more than just comprehending what the literal meaning of the words is. He gives examples of concepts such as opening the sun or opening the grass to show that "a Background [sic] of capacities and social practices" affects how a person interprets a text.[148]

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[145] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 10.

[146] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

[147] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 44. Emphasis in original. Bultmann is quite focused on reading or exegeting for the purpose of historical understanding or for translation purposes, neither of which are a primary interest for my investigation (Bultmann, "Exegesis Without Presuppositions," 194–200). However, he is also concerned with the theological question that draws someone toward God as found in the text. He refers to this as "the *existentiell* question for God." In terms of Thiselton's argument that Bultmann's presentation of the word *presupposition* is associated with deep-seated beliefs that are resistant to change, I do not see his use of the word with the kind of entrenchment that Thiselton suggests. The following statement from the end of Bultmann's essay indicates an awareness that readers with presuppositions can be open to newness and change, even when carrying out "methodical historical-critical research" of scripture: "Always anew it will tell him who he, man, is and who God is, and he will always have to express this word in a new conceptuality" (Bultmann, "Exegesis Without Presuppositions," 200. Emphasis in original). Still, Thiselton's expression of the concept of horizons does present additional nuancing to what the reader brings to the text and is therefore helpful for my purposes.

[148] Searle, *Intentionality*, 147, cf. 146. See also Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45.

In terms of revising expectations, there is a duality to the text in that it can be both familiar and unfamiliar to the reader at the same time.[149] This is an opportunity to recognize the text as an Other—a stranger whom we meet and about whom we will have certain expectations because they are unfamiliar to us but also a potential friend. As we get to know the text as a friend we will revise these expectations if we are willing and do not let our prejudices rigidly take hold.[150] This is an area where works of popular culture can be a bridge to encourage readers to become familiar with biblical texts and be willing to reconsider any assumptions they bring with them. Here is where reading can become transformational. If, through their exposure to works of popular culture like the Harry Potter literature, readers become amenable to overturning their preconceived notions, this can help to transform their reading of the Gospels. As the Bible and popular culture confront each other, this "irrevocably results in the transformation of both objects."[151] The reader is also included here since their understanding is transformed in the process. Furthermore, according to Paul Ricoeur, it is the encounter between the reader and the text through the "concrete act" of reading that brings about meaning.[152] Thus, part of the transformation is the creation of meaning. This pushing against expectations and assumptions until they are revised and transformed is an important component of contrapuntal reading.

Popular culture will be useful in bringing the two horizons together in ways that challenge "bland" approaches to biblical interpretation—those that are less likely to

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[149] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 44–45.
[150] As with friendship, it is also beneficial to challenge the text.
[151] Copier et al., "Close Encounters," 193.
[152] Ricoeur, "What is a Text?," 121.

engage today's readers.[153] More recent hermeneutical approaches offer an invitation to transform, in constructive and creative ways, how people read the Bible.[154] This work will explore how biblical scholars, as well as other teachers and guides, can facilitate and encourage a posture of openness to the biblical text so that readers will have a "willingness to step into the world" of the Gospel narrative.[155]

In addition to the openness of the reader, a key concept to consider here is the openness of the text. Umberto Eco outlines how some works or texts have the potential to go beyond their original contexts. He observes that certain works, for example works of art, are "open" in the sense that by their very nature their reception is influenced by the personal preferences, prejudices, and cultural context of their audience.[156] As such, "every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself."[157] This highlights the significant influence a reader can have on the interpretation of a text.

Larry Kreitzer discusses how we can better understand the NT texts by closely examining the literature of our time. He suggests that this will allow NT readers and scholars to uncover a dialogue between today's voices and the Bible, thereby participating in the hermeneutical circle in a fresh way.[158] This involves a reversal of the hermeneutical flow[159] whereby "the flow of influence . . . within the hermeneutical

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[153] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 10.
[154] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 15–16.
[155] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 32–33.
[156] Eco, *Open Work*, 3–4. Other works, such as traffic signs, are "closed" and therefore have only one possible sense or meaning.
[157] Eco, *Open Work*, 4. Emphasis in original. Eco goes on to discuss works that are even more deliberately open.
[158] Kreitzer, *New Testament in Fiction*, 11−12.
[159] Kreitzer, *New Testament in Fiction*. The subtitle for the book is *On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow*.

process" is redirected back towards the NT in order to analyse and illuminate its "passages and themes in the light of some of the enduring expressions of our own culture" including important works of literature and film.[160] This is critical for the purposes of this study since, as John Barton notes in the foreword to Kreitzer's book, "[i]f hermeneutics begins in the present, then it needs to attend to what the present generation has made of the Bible and that is to be discovered as much from novels and films as from commentaries and monographs."[161] The goal of this project is to inspire the Harry Potter audience to join the dialogue between today's voices and the Bible (specifically the Gospel of Mark) that Kreitzer proposes.

Elaine Wainwright observes that popular culture is "a significant arena of contemporary biblical interpretation" that can be a lens through which today's readers can read and interpret the Bible.[162] For this study, this lens can be put to good use by juxtaposing the two texts. The resulting proximity will allow the Markan text to be viewed more clearly through the popular culture lens. The Harry Potter literature can be used to help readers become more open to transform their "horizons of expectation"[163] by creating an awareness of themes of resistance, subversion, and anti-empire that are common to both the Gospel of Mark and the Harry Potter world. The objective then is to read the Gospel of Mark *with* the Harry Potter novels. Empire studies, postcolonial biblical criticism, and feminist biblical criticism can contribute to this process by providing a lens to examine the power structures and relationships of the first century. Most readers today, including Harry Potter enthusiasts, are not likely to read the biblical

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[160] Kreitzer, *New Testament in Fiction,* 19.
[161] Barton, "Foreword," 7−8.
[162] Wainwright, "Introduction," 3; cf. 6.
[163] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 34.

text with a lens that takes into account issues that can be illuminated by social scientific, literary, or ideological criticism, with feminist and postcolonial criticism falling under the latter. Insights from these approaches can be opened up to a whole new audience by underscoring parallels between the Harry Potter literature and the Gospel of Mark. This can be done by using specially chosen pedagogical strategies. Harry Potter can therefore help today's audience to see that horizon. Demonstrating commonalities between how the Roman Empire functioned in the first century and how empire operates today will help to show the interface between the first century and our world today. I will also examine how issues of power and authority are addressed in the Harry Potter novels and how they relate to imperialism. The concept of tyrannical rule will also be a focus. How does the Harry Potter literature deal with tyrants and how does this correspond with the Jesus of Mark, particularly his words in the Mark 10 episode? Expressions of empire, both in the Markan Gospel world and in the Harry Potter world, can be seen in Wink's concept of the Domination System. Resistance to empire is also seen in both. The anti-empire message of Jesus is original to the text; his words apply specifically to the Roman Empire and critique how the empire does things. However, understanding this resistance in the context of the resistance of Harry Potter can give new life to the biblical text. I therefore propose that the Harry Potter literature has the potential to be transformational. It can open up these new contexts and therefore transform the horizon of the text for the reader and it also has the potential to shape the reader to be transformed by the Markan text.

All of this is related to how the text can be brought to life for the reader. This is important, both hermeneutically and pedagogically.

Feminist and Postcolonial Hermeneutics

Feminist and postcolonial hermeneutics play an important role in shaping a lens to read the Gospel of Mark with popular culture. In fact, they can work together to achieve similar goals. Musa Dube proposes encouraging audiences to become "decolonizing readers" who take on strategies that are both feminist and focused on purposefully confronting imperialist oppressors and liberating the oppressed.[164] These strategies include literary practices that are actively aiming to decolonize.[165]

Decolonizing literary strategies include contrapuntal readings of texts. These contrapuntal stances are read in counterpoint to certain ideologies, in this case those that advance an imperialist position. As Sugirtharajah points out, the primary purpose of resistant reading within a postcolonial hermeneutic is not for entertainment or diversion but rather to speak to real, everyday concerns.[166] The entertainment value of engaging with popular culture is a drawing card but what *keeps* many readers engaged is when the issues that are most relevant to them are addressed. This is also a critical matter in terms of the Harry Potter audience.

Asking incisive questions is part of a resistant reading. Feminist and postcolonial hermeneutics will provide a lens that asks good questions and points toward areas that need to be explored. Scott Spencer observes that a feminist approach can help provide questions to bring to a text. In particular, a feminist hermeneutic brings to mind

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[164] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 43. Schüssler Fiorenza prefers the term *decolonizing* over *postcolonial* because it serves "to indicate an active continuing dynamic process rather than one already concluded" (Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 280n22). She also points out that, while feminism and decolonizing benefit each other, it is much more than a matter of merely joining feminism and postcolonialism together. There is a complex intersectionality of dominating systems to be addressed (Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 112–13).

[165] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 50.

[166] Sugirtharajah, *Bible and the Third World*, 274–75.

questions that will help to uncover instances of oppression and marginalization.[167] Good questions can help to discover the seeds of resistance within a text.[168]

The main objective here in setting forth a program of contrapuntal reading is to uncover actual instances of resistance within the texts of Mark's Gospel and the Harry Potter literature so that the resistant voice is heard in addition to the imperial voice. In what ways are the characters of the Harry Potter stories showing resistance to oppression? In what ways are they working to tear down actual systems of exploitation? How can this resistant reading then bring out instances of resistance in the Gospel of Mark. In which circumstances are the characters in the Gospel of Mark showing resistance to oppression. Does Jesus, in his words and actions, encourage the dismantling of corrupt and oppressive systems? If such patterns of oppression and resistance can be seen, readers will be able to resonate with the Gospel story in the same way they resonate with the Harry Potter story. They will see that, although the context is quite different in a number of ways, questions that are still relevant today are being addressed.[169]

When considering feminist critical and postcolonial (decolonizing) critical approaches, the word *critical* is fundamental. Thiselton describes it as one of the key components of a feminist hermeneutic. He indicates that a feminist hermeneutic is centred on the experiences of women and takes a critical stance. It allows texts,

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[167] Spencer, "Feminist Criticism," 291–306.

[168] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 8.

[169] Sugirtharajah warns that we should take care not to assume the Bible is itself "a counter-imperial document" (Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," 133). However, although the Bible has been used to promote empire and colonization, there are definite counter-imperial elements within it that can be uncovered with a resistant, contrapuntal reading. Those who are open to new ways of looking at the biblical text allow for readings that are potentially contrapuntal.

including scripture, to "speak in new ways." These characteristics of a feminist hermeneutic make way for a new envisioning of how things can be.[170]

It is this revisioning or reimagining that is in particular a distinguishing trait of feminist hermeneutics in partnership with critique. Janice Capel Anderson proposes that there is a "two-pronged" effort of Christian feminists—"a feminist critique and a feminist construction."[171] Letty Russell depicts this constructive revisioning in terms of a new vision of creation:

> It is found in God's intention for the mending of all creation. The Bible has authority in my life because it makes sense of my experience and speaks to me about the meaning and purpose of my humanity in Jesus Christ. In spite of its ancient and patriarchal worldviews, in spite of its inconsistencies and mixed messages, the story of God's love affair with the world leads me to a vision of New Creation that impels my life.[172]

Schüssler Fiorenza's revisioning involves "[a] hermeneutics of imagination" which allows readers to "'dream' a different world of justice and well-being."[173] This reimagined world involves what she describes as "an *ekklēsia* of wo/men." This is an inclusive space where every voice is heard and all are equal. An important role of the *ekklēsia* is to transform and reform systems—systems that include "social and religious institutions and discourses."[174] Although such a space is not yet fully realized, its promise lies in its openness to those who have been otherwise marginalized and who also work to make this promise a reality.[175] It is noteworthy that Schüssler Fiorenza paints a picture of this *ekklēsia* space as one where "the 'common people'" are seen

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[170] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 438–39. Thiselton sees these as shared characteristics with liberation theology.

[171] Anderson, "Feminist Criticism," 114.

[172] Russell, "Authority and the Challenge," 138.

[173] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 188–89.

[174] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 73; cf. 10.

[175] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 75.

interpreting the Bible right alongside professionals and academics.[176] This is the kind of transformational space I also envision and why I hope to draw in more people who might not otherwise feel welcome to the project of biblical interpretation. I also see the dream of a radical egalitarian community working for justice as a valid one. I intend to encourage readers to reimagine the Gospel story, to look for inversions in the biblical text, and to carry out what Wainwright calls an "empire-disturbing analysis" of the Gospel of Mark.[177]

Approaching the Text Using the Underlying Perspectives

Having established that the ideological approaches of feminist biblical criticism, postcolonial biblical criticism, and empire studies are well equipped to analyze power dynamics such as those operative in Mark 10:32–45, there are still nuances concerning how to approach the text. There is a diversity of approaches even within feminist biblical criticism. Some focus on the more liberative elements of the Markan narrative.[178] While there is value in the more critical and suspicious methods of doing feminist biblical criticism, I generally lean towards a liberative approach. Approaching the text with postcolonialism presents certain challenges. One of the reasons that those who take a postcolonial approach to biblical criticism tend not to include Mark 10:32–45 in their analysis may well be that the purpose of postcolonial biblical criticism is to resist the actual text, to decolonize it.[179] I would argue that this episode does not need

[176] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 82.
[177] Wainwright, "Introduction," 5.
[178] Fander, "Gospel of Mark," 626. Fander identifies herself as one of those who does so.
[179] Hans Leander is an example of a postcolonial biblical critic who does not include Mark 10:32−45 in the seven texts he chooses to examine from Mark's Gospel (Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 16–17).

much, if any, decolonization because it is already anti-empire. In this case, therefore, the text in fact *lends* itself to a liberative investigation. This is more in keeping with empire studies, although postcolonial biblical criticism can still inform my investigation without constraining it, since it is not my primary methodology.

These three perspectives consequently have bearing on the following key question as expressed by Schüssler Fiorenza, "as to whether a particular text of scripture espouses the power of empire, which as 'power over' demands submission, subordination, and subjection, or whether it exhibits creative 'power' which energizes and enables one to resist daily injustice and global exploitation."[180] I see that the latter is in play here and will therefore explore how Jesus, through his words and the model of his life, renounces the forces of empire in the Mark 10:32–45 text.

For this particular study, the resistance of imperial values in the Markan text is illuminated by juxtaposing it with the text of the Harry Potter narrative. With respect to feminist questions, issues of marginalization and unheard voices come into play in the Harry Potter stories. There is evidence of engagement with egalitarian and inclusive ideals.[181] A review of the Harry Potter literature can then offer questions of the Markan text such as what Jesus' words and actions mean for those who are marginalized—who are not allowed to be at the centre. From a postcolonial perspective, the antagonist Voldemort could be seen as the embodiment of empire. Harry's resistance of him and everything he stands for is central to the story. This engagement with the Harry Potter stories can then highlight for the Harry Potter audience what Jesus is saying about the

[180] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 59.

[181] As noted in Chapter 3, there are also situations of complicity where even the protagonist and his friends fall considerably short of these ideals.

Roman Empire and those who hold power within it. How does he advocate resisting it and how does this compare with how Harry resists Voldemort? I therefore suggest that this process, informed by feminist biblical criticism, postcolonial biblical criticism, and empire studies, can provide a transformational reading of Mark's Gospel for readers familiar with Harry Potter.

A Theology of Culture

In order to engage with popular culture in terms of biblical and theological concerns, it will be useful to invoke a theology of culture. A theology of culture, by definition, brings together the disciplines of theology and cultural studies. The type of theology I am concerned with in this endeavour is a real-world theology for today that is focused on "lived life, not just propositions and abstract ideas."[182] Such a practical or lived theology considers people's everyday lives and concerns.[183]

Culture as God-centred and Human-focused

A robust theology of culture is God-centred; at its core it is focused on God and God's revelation to humanity. God's revelation (how God chooses to reveal God's self) takes a variety of forms including creation, scripture, and personal revelation. In particular, God is revealed through being imaged in humans. Thus, culture reveals God through imaging God. According to Richard Middleton, it is indeed "our cultural calling to image God on earth" and thus to glorify God, our creator.[184] If that is the way culture works, that it

[182] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 295.
[183] Apostolides and Meylahn, *Lived Theology*, 1–2.
[184] Middleton, *A New Heaven*, 57; cf. 17, 41.

reflects the divine, the same can then be said of popular culture. The theology of culture that is at the basis of this study is therefore also concerned with humans as well as a focus on "fulfilling the human calling to be a culture-maker." Moreover, "culture is God's idea" and human culture is valued by God.[185] God's statement that humanity as part of creation is "very good" (Gen 1:31) is evidence of this, as is the creation of human beings in the image of God. Further validation of God's view of the goodness of humanity is in the incarnation.[186] This indicates a theology with an anthropological sense. The understanding is that "culture . . . constitutes the very humanity of persons."[187] The human cultural calling is the formation of our world—our society—so that it manifests "the divine purpose for the creation and the creature."[188] My theology of culture therefore combines a focus on God with a focus on humanity. As a result of this synthesis, a popular culture analysis that has a theology of culture as its foundation will look for ways that God is imaged—and imagined—in the human endeavour of popular culture.

Christ and Culture

In terms of a specifically Christian theology of culture, which is the case in terms of this study, it is helpful to explore how culture is associated with the person of Jesus Christ. Richard Niebuhr outlines five different possible stances that Christians have concerning

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[185] Flett, "Exploring an Interdisciplinary Theology," 48. Unlike Thomas Torrance, I do not see a Christian engagement with the Trinity as necessary for humanity's cultural and scientific endeavours. (Torranee, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 196). However, a divine trinitarian encounter *can be* a meaningful basis for understanding and connecting with culture, as well as generating it.

[186] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 91.

[187] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 168.

[188] Flett, "Exploring an Interdisciplinary Theology," 55.

the relationship between Christ and culture. They are: an "*opposition* between Christ and culture"; "a fundamental *agreement* between Christ and culture"; "*Christ above culture*"; Christ and culture in tension; the "conversionist" view where culture is transformed by Christ.[189] Niebuhr does not advocate for only one of these views but, rather, affirms that people with a variety of approaches to culture are used to fulfill God's works.[190] The second view (the idea that Christ and culture are in harmony with each other) fits particularly well with the concepts of finding Christ in popular culture and using popular culture to read the stories of Jesus that are central to my work here.[191] The fifth view is also especially relevant because it focuses on the transformational quality of Jesus: he has placed himself within human culture and converts it to what it has the potential to be.[192] With this in mind, I would describe my theology of culture as one that is Christ-focused meaning that it searches for Christ in culture as well as explores how Christ transforms culture.

Encountering God in Culture

It naturally follows that, if a theology of culture is God-centred and Christ-focused, then God and Jesus can be encountered in culture. Culture, including popular culture, is a way of understanding God more fully. Andrew Greeley sees popular culture as a place

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[189] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 40–43. Emphasis in original.

[190] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 2. Unfortunately, Niebuhr's engagement with actual culture is lacking. He does not give specific examples from culture to illuminate his discussion of the different views.

[191] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 83. Niebuhr also refers to this stance as "Christ-of-culture" (Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 110).

[192] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 193, 196. Another benefit to this approach is that it is more focused on what God is doing in the present (what Niebuhr refers to as "the divine 'Now'") than the other views that focus more on history and the future (Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 195).

where one can meet and experience God.[193] The biblical and theological message can be "retold" through the arts and popular culture.[194] People can find saviours and Christ-figures in popular culture which have the potential to create a bond with theological matters.[195] Our theology and our encountering God can indeed *develop* out of our interaction with popular culture.[196] Granted, sometimes culture is insufficient at reflecting the goodness of the divine. However, there are certainly many other times where God or theological themes can be uncovered in cultural artifacts.[197] There is tremendous potential for culture, including popular culture, to reflect God in a *variety* of ways; it is characteristically diverse. God also belongs to a diversity of cultures and is not to be coopted by any one culture.[198] This would be an important area for postcolonial theory to have a voice.

The concept of common grace—the grace and care of God available to all creation—helps to illuminate the revelation of God particularly through popular culture. This is closely related to general or natural revelation, also available to all of humanity. Common grace suggests that human culture is infused with grace. This grace-filled culture is the culture of the people, or popular culture. All types of culture—both high and popular—are potentially sacramental and "God-revealing."[199] Common grace frequently occurs beyond church perimeters and is therefore not confined to the culture

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[193] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 9. Greeley suggests that popular culture is a place where the audience can discover God's "self-communication" (Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 75).

[194] Oropeza, "Introduction," 4.

[195] Oropeza, "Introduction," 2. Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor suggest that popular culture can help us "to recognize the twenty-first-century face of Jesus." (Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 9).

[196] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 30.

[197] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 92.

[198] Flett, "Exploring an Interdisciplinary Theology," 48.

[199] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 94.

of the church.[200] As Greeley observes, "If grace is everywhere, it seems very likely… that it may be where people are."[201]

There is a wealth of themes in culture and the arts which "invite serious, theological reflection."[202] The themes of popular culture can thus direct the audiences of popular culture works towards something beyond themselves.[203] Culture reflects what human beings value and what we put our efforts towards. This would include what we value theologically. Greeley sees in popular culture the potential for a sacramentality of ordinary people and their everyday lives that allows "their hopes, their fears, their loves, their aspirations [to] represent a legitimate experience of God, legitimate symbols of God, and legitimate stories of God."[204] Evidence for finding the divine and religious in culture is not only afforded by those in the disciplines of theology and biblical studies. The artists and authors themselves often recognize this. This is true even though the presence of religious and theological themes in culture is often not intentional on the part of the author or artist. Comic book creator Stan Lee observes the following in his forward to *The Gospel According to Superheroes*: "I wasn't consciously trying to inject religious themes into my stories, but the chapters in this book will clearly demonstrate how religious and mythological themes are often dramatically intertwined in comic books."[205] Author Stephen King is mindful of how even the darker themes of horror fiction can connect us with what he calls "the infinite." He observes the following: "If the horror story is our rehearsal for death, then in its strict moralities, it is also a

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[200] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 17.
[201] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 93.
[202] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 31; cf. 30.
[203] Oropeza, "Introduction," 4.
[204] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 17; cf. 75.
[205] Lee, Foreword, xii.

reaffirmation of life and good and simple imagination—just one more pipeline to the infinite."[206]

Culture is important theological work. The work of art and culture involves a re-creation of work completed by the Creator.[207] It is an important component of religious practice.[208] Culture, including popular culture, fulfills an important theological role that is not always accomplished in the church or is not accessed to its full potential due to lower church attendance. Some of the conversations helping to uncover God in works of popular culture are not happening in the church or religious institutions. There are missed opportunities of engaging culture in the academy and the church.[209] This makes it all the more important to acknowledge how culture, including popular culture, can be a pathway to discovering God and what matters to God.

Not only is cultural practice part of theology, theology is also part of culture. This means that theology is also a human activity.[210] Thus, an effective theology of culture involves recognizing the interconnectedness of the two elements in revealing the divine. The work of culture and the work of theology are both key in progressing toward this goal. Furthermore, since both theology and culture have transformative objectives for their participants, this will connect well with the hermeneutical aim of transforming readers.

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[206] King, *Danse Macabre*, 436.
[207] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 19.
[208] Greeley, *God in Popular Culture*, 91.
[209] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 23; Apostolides and Meylahn, *Lived Theology*, 2.
[210] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 63.

Popular Culture Analysis

According to Geist and Nachbar, a basic definition of popular culture includes the idea of what is "mainstream culture—the arts, artifacts, entertainments, fads, beliefs and values shared by large segments of the society." It also includes the idea of what is meaningful to people and this is a key emphasis in popular culture studies.[211]

Popular culture analysis is part of the broader field of cultural studies. In cultural studies, scholars analyze culture, including popular culture, through various ideological lenses such as feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial lenses by focusing on social, economic, and political factors. Cultural studies, and in particular popular culture studies, often challenges hegemonic power structures. It also may use semiotics to examine the signs and symbols of popular culture in order to examine if and how "cultural practices . . . undercut the dominant structures that undergird the cultural assumptions in capitalist society."[212] It is therefore evident that cultural studies and popular culture analysis fit well with an approach informed by postcolonialism and feminism—one that critiques empire.

Traditional historical-critical approaches have often made Jesus inaccessible to readers. Popular culture can provide a counterweight to this and can be a powerful component of biblical hermeneutics. Philip Culbertson suggests that "popular culture not only influences biblical interpretation but also opens up new perspectives and challenges and confronts the conventional, stylized hermeneutical frameworks of the 'industry' of the academic study of biblical texts. When Paul Ricoeur and Tori Amos go

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[211] Geist and Nachbar, "Introduction," 4.
[212] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 18.

head-to-head, it is Amos who will win, because she expresses the world that young people live in, or wish they did."[213] The popular culture of a particular time and place thus has the greatest impact on people and, in particular, young people. Popular culture therefore acts as a pathway to accessibility and can help readers of Harry Potter to see Jesus in a favourable light. It is therefore helpful to know what forms of popular culture influence a particular group.

There are a number of benefits of using a popular culture analysis to explore a biblical text. Among one of the most significant is the opportunity to uncover the relationship between popular culture and the Bible. Since, as Michael Gilmour observes, "biblical influence is ubiquitous" in popular culture, it would therefore be beneficial to look for it there.[214] Popular culture is, by definition, appealing to a wide variety of people. It can be enjoyable and fun but, at the same time, deal with weightier matters of great relevance to people.[215] Popular culture has been willing to address many of the "uncomfortable questions about the nature of good and evil" that the church has often evaded.[216]

Popular culture tends to be inclusive and even welcoming. This inclusivity applies not only to the people it reaches but to the broad base of cultural forms and styles that it encompasses.[217] There is something for everyone. All these factors confirm that the Bible, as discovered in popular culture, is still culturally relevant in our time.[218]

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[213] Culbertson, "Popular Music's Ambivalent Resistance," 71. Tori Amos is a singer who was especially popular in the 1990s. See also Thiselten on how "earlier traditions can also become institutionalized and fossilized into forms which defeat the original vision which they emerged to serve" (Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 9).

[214] Gilmour, "Some Novel Remarks," 24. See also Copier, "Close Encounters," 189.

[215] Wainwright, "Introduction," 6, 8.

[216] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 51.

[217] Copier et al., "Close Encounters," 191.

[218] Copier, "Close Encounters," 195.

It continues to resonate with people and popular culture can be an important way to highlight this potential for resonance with people who might not otherwise read the Bible, such as those in the Harry Potter audience who are the focus of this study.

The Popularity of Popular Culture

Although obvious, it is worth noting that one of the distinguishing characteristics of popular culture is that it is *popular*. Definitions for *popular* include "of or relating to the general public" and "of, relating to, or coming from most of the people in a country, society, or group." It can therefore be said that popular culture is culture that is *of the people*. Moreover, it is *for* people—for the public, for the masses, for everyday people. Again, by definition, "popular" culture tends to appeal to "many people."[219] Popular culture is ubiquitous and, increasingly, global following and accessibility are the norm.[220] Growth in technology has contributed to this shrinking of the world.

Contrasted with popular culture, so-called high culture is often considered to belong to those with status and privilege. However, higher culture does not need to be restricted to the elite. For example, classical music and Shakespeare's plays can have wide audiences.[221] In truth, popular culture artifacts can be important as art forms although often not considered as such.[222] There are, of course, forms of popular culture that especially appeal to the marginalized and these often allow for resistance because

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[219] *Merriam-Webster*, "Popular."

[220] Detweiler and Taylor, *Matrix of Meanings*, 32.

[221] Indeed, Shakespeare initially appealed to a wide audience and classical music is often used in soundtracks of popular films.

[222] Oropeza, "Introduction," 19n6. The example given by Oropeza is comic books.

they can easily take the form of hidden transcripts.[223] Story, in its various forms in art and popular culture, can be a powerful form of resistance.

Popular culture invites readers to identify with its narratives in important ways. It allows us to identify with characters—even those who are saviours or Christ-figures—because in many ways they are like us.[224] In many instances, popular culture is focused on the real and everyday concerns of people. Jack Zipes proposes that fantasy works engage with "the imagination not to open it up to escape into a never-neverland but to make greater contact with reality."[225] Organizations such as the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA) demonstrate that some of the ideas and ideals of works of fiction can be incorporated into "the real world of social activism."[226]

A popular culture analysis can help to highlight the kind of people Jesus seemed to be advocating for, namely ordinary people—those who were marginalized and had limited access to power, the many who followed him. Furthermore, popular culture analysis can help to uncover the kinds of concerns Jesus was addressing. This not only includes the very real concern of having tyrannical rulers who tended to "lord it over" others (Mark 10:42) but also the flip side of the coin—the very real temptation to take on a similar mode of hierarchical authority if the opportunity should present itself.

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[223] Scott, *Domination*, 19. "Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs rituals, codes, and euphemisms—a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups—fit this description."

[224] Oropeza, "Introduction," 2.

[225] Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell,* 159.

[226] Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation,* xxi–xxii. The HPA states that, among other matters, it is committed to racial and climate justice, as well as gender and LGBTQIA+ equity ("Our Commitments," [n.d.]).

Reception Theory and Changes in Popularity

Popularity is indeed an important aspect of popular culture. However, this raises the question of what happens when a work or a creator's popularity declines or changes in some way. This is what has recently happened with J. K. Rowling. Several prominent fan organizations have condemned Rowling's remarks about transgender people and made it a point to distance themselves from her as an author because of comments she made in social media and blog posts.[227] The statement that "[t] hey aren't her books, they are ours" seems to express this distancing well.[228] This is something that needs to be taken into account, in light of the focus in this work on the concerns of the Harry Potter audience. It is one more reason that many of them are unsympathetic to things associated with the Christian church. Here, some of them are even unsympathetic to the author of the Harry Potter series herself, although many of them remain fans of the story.

Can popular and artistic works then be, to some extent, separated from their authors? I suggest that, in the same way that Harry Potter fans consider the novels as belonging to them, the biblical writings are often thought (among lay people) to belong to the reader and the Holy Spirit, in relationship, and to have a disconnect with the

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[227] Here are just a few examples: Organizations such as Mugglenet and The Leaky Cauldron have denounced Rowling's statements (Hibberd, "Harry Potter Fan Sites" (blog), July 2, 2020). The podcast website of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text states that they "feel comfortable condemning JK Rowling in her transphobia, but still gathering around the books" (Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, "JKR's Transphobic Statement," [n.d.]). The Harry Potter Alliance commits to "trans-affirming policies" and stresses that they are "not affiliated with J.K. Rowling" (The Harry Potter Alliance, "We Stand With Trans People," [n.d.]). This reflects what is characteristic of the generation of young millennials who make up a significant proportion of Harry Potter fans; they tend to be concerned about the rights of transgender people (Lewis, "How J. K. Rowling," para. 3).

[228] Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, "JKR's Transphobic Statement," [n.d.]. Cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley, who propose that "[t]he poem belongs to the public" (Wimsatt and Beardsley, "Intentional Fallacy," 470).

original authors. The Bible certainly has the claim of divine inspiration associated with it in addition to human authorship. However, it can be said of most writings that they go beyond what their original authors intended. They become something much bigger. Related to this, I believe there is some truth to the hypothesis by Wimsatt and Beardsley that authors' original intentions are often not recoverable or even needed by their audiences in order to find critical value in their works.[229]

The concept of understanding how audiences change in how they receive certain cultural artifacts throughout history is part of reception history. What is brought to a text changes with each reader, as well as with each reading community. Readers and communities therefore derive meaning from texts based on their identity and the assumptions and expectations they have as they approach texts in their own personal and historical contexts.[230]

All of this is not to play down what Rowling has done. She has established the groundwork and constructed a "heterocosm"—another world. Fans of the Harry Potter writings have gone on to do further "world building" based on this groundwork.[231] Moreover, the principles I will be exploring in terms of how a popular work can help in reading and interpreting the Bible, are not limited to Rowling's writings, whether or not she herself is popular or well-thought of with those who read the books. The point is

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[229] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "Intentional Fallacy," 468, 477.

[230] Clanton, "'Here, There, and Everywhere'," 43. Clanton is more focused on the influence that a reader has on the text and its meaning than Hans Robert Jauss, an early proponent of reception theory, who seems more concerned about how the text influences the reader (Jauss, "Literary History," 12–13, 31).

[231] Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, xxiv. This includes fan fiction and podcasts which often go well beyond the scope of the original books. Referring to the books in the Harry Potter series, Suman Gupta notes, "The fluid Harry Potter text bubbles out and beyond them, surrounds them and engulfs them, and relocates them and modifies their reception" (Gupta, *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, 175). Other popular forms stay truer to the original plotlines. For example, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios theme parks creates a world in itself that is directly based on the books and movies.

actually that these principles can apply to using *any* popular work as a hermeneutical lens to aid in reading the Bible.

Intertextuality

A central matter in addressing how popular culture can be used as a hermeneutical aid is intertextuality. Intertextuality can be defined as "the dialogic relations among texts."[232] Creators of art and popular culture regularly draw from other works. Linda Hutcheon describes a key feature of intertextuality—in terms of adapting one work from another—as "repetition with variation."[233] Gilmour frames this as a "mix of familiarity and surprise."[234] The reality is that texts, including the Bible itself, are not autonomous—they do not exist in a vacuum. The Bible manifests itself in countless ways in cultural works and functions as a pre-text for other texts. That is, it influences "*but does not fully determine*" later works."[235]

The Bible therefore functions to inspire other works. One of the reasons that intertextuality is a relevant concept for this investigation is that there are "traces" of the Bible in the Harry Potter stories.[236] Some of these may be intentional. However, some may be because material from the Bible has seeped into the culture. Whether purposeful or not, there are intertextual links between the Harry Potter literature and the Bible.[237] An example of direct quotation would be in the Godric's Hollow cemetery scene where

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[232] Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, xiv.

[233] Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 8. Indeed, intertextuality and adaptation do not require "replication" or copying of material from the original source (Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, xviii).

[234] Gilmour, "Some Novel Remarks," 15.

[235] Copier et al., "Close Encounters," 193. Emphasis in original.

[236] Gilmour, "Some Novel Remarks," 13. See also Wainwright, "Introduction," 3.

[237] As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, the purpose or intention of the author is not something that is of particular concern for my investigation.

two biblical texts are used on headstones.[238] There are also biblical allusions and common themes in the Harry Potter books, including Harry Potter as a Christ-figure.

Of key importance is the opportunity that arises, after experiencing a literary or artistic work that draws from other works, to then go back to the original with the adaptation as the lens.[239] This is precisely what will be a useful endeavour with the Harry Potter novels as a lens for the Gospel of Mark. Using popular works as lenses can help to amplify the Gospel text. Popular works can anticipate the biblical text as a type anticipates and foreshadows an antitype. They can highlight how the Gospel narrative is both similar to and different from the Harry Potter narrative—how it goes beyond it. This applies particularly to the character of Jesus within that narrative, and how he goes beyond the Christ-figure of Harry Potter.

Carrying Out a Popular Culture Analysis

It will be helpful to outline some of the dynamics related to using popular culture analysis as a reading strategy. Popular culture analysis is much more than just one all-inclusive methodological framework or approach. The wide variety of media and subject matter used in popular culture, as well as the wide range of research needs, both necessitate and allow for a diversity of approaches.[240] Approaches to popular culture analysis can focus on literary issues, reception history, ideological concerns, or theology. Indeed, they can incorporate some combination of these and other

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[238] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 325, 328. These two texts are "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt 6:21, KJV) and "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26, KJV), although the scripture references are not given in the book.

[239] Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, xv. Hutcheon proposes that this challenges "any notion of priority."

[240] Wainwright, "Introduction," 8.

approaches.[241] A number of lens choices are thus possible. For example, Philip Culbertson uses tools such as Freudian and Jungian hermeneutics to examine how Mary Magdalene is represented in popular music.[242] Noel Erskine uses biblical liberation theology to investigate reggae music.[243] Roland Boer uses a Marxist lens to survey several biblical texts juxtaposed against various items of popular culture.[244] For this study, I will draw from feminist hermeneutics, postcolonial hermeneutics, and empire studies to help shape and develop the lens I will be using in my popular culture analysis of the Gospel of Mark. These ideological frameworks can provide questions and point to potential areas of exploration. They can uncover areas where oppression is happening as well as areas where inversion occurs and oppressive powers are resisted and overturned.

Reading the Bible with popular culture can shape how readers interpret biblical texts and figures such as Jesus in the Gospels.[245] The Gospel of Mark and the figure of Jesus may otherwise be inaccessible to many readers today. I therefore endeavour to make the Markan story more approachable to readers by using the lens of Harry Potter as well as addressing matters of interest to many in today's world. Matters such as racial injustice, abuse of the marginalized and underprivileged, and the influence of tyrannical authorities, are not only very much in the news today, they also correlate with similar topics I will be addressing in terms of the Gospel of Mark and the Harry Potter narrative. Moreover, popular culture juxtaposed with biblical literature can provide opportunities for readers to look for areas of application to their own lives—to make

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[241] Copier, "Close Encounters," 190.
[242] Culbertson, "'Tis a Pity."
[243] Erskine, "Bible and Reggae."
[244] Boer, *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, 1–2.
[245] Copier, "Close Encounters," 194.

progress in their own spiritual formation and to "imagine themselves acting or living in an alternative manner."[246] This is one way that the act of reading can be transformational.

The exegetical analysis carried out by juxtaposing the two texts will provide intertextual connections that can make space for transforming the horizons of the Harry Potter audience. This analysis is the application of the lens and the process of applying the lens to the Markan text will help to clarify how it can be used by the Harry Potter reader. Another critical element will be to frame good questions of the text and to help the readers to do so as well. This intertextual work will be helpful in showing the readers the value of the Jesus story in the Gospel of Mark.

Typology and Christ-figure

In addition to examining literary features in the Harry Potter literature which are relevant to Mark 10:32–45, typological criticism is another important methodological tool I will use to show how the Harry Potter novels highlight the themes of power, dominance, and resistance being addressed in Mark 10:32−45. I will use typological criticism to analyze Harry as a Christ-figure. Important parallels will be drawn, particularly in how Jesus and Harry deal with power and resistance. Both set aside tyrannical powers and both resist evil, oppressive forces. Both use ridicule and irony in how they respond to tyrants, as described by Wink. Both use hidden transcripts of resistance that develop into bolder public demonstrations as the narrative develops, as described by Scott. Dumbledore prophetically highlights these concepts and themes:

[246] Apostolides and Meylahn, *Lived Theology*, 4.

"Have you any idea how much tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realize that, one day, amongst their many victims, there is sure to be one who rises against them and strikes back!"[247] All of this is key in showing that the Harry Potter narrative is in many ways a picture or mirror of the power inversion, subversiveness, and resistance depicted especially in Mark 10:32–45.

Christine Downing has explored the concept of a literary Christ-figure and demonstrated how it can be seen in terms of "typological criticism."[248] The Christ-figure functions in the same way an Old Testament type functions in relation to the antitype. The antitype in question is the New Testament Jesus Christ.[249] The goal of a Christ-figure analysis is to discover correspondences or parallels between a fictional character and the character of Jesus Christ.[250] In terms of this correspondence, there are two components to the fictional Christ-figure: It involves being "truly integral to the work of art" as well as drawing attention to the reality or "historicity of the biblical figure."[251] Another important consideration is that the Christ-figure and Christ are obviously not identical.[252]

For the examination of Harry Potter in relation to the Mark 10 episode, I will be focusing on two elements of typology: correspondence and amplification. The antitype (Jesus) will be shown to *correspond* to the type (Harry Potter) in several ways and also

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[247] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 477. See also *Politics of Harry Potter*, 46.

[248] Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 13. She contends that literary critics can learn something from how typological criticism is used in biblical scholarship.

[249] Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 13−14, 16−20.

[250] Downing observes that "even in the fictional character there is the same intimate correlation of person and circumstance, motive and action" (Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 24).

[251] Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 23.

[252] "The relationship between them is not one of identity; when that is the aim the literary subject seems to have no character or 'identity' of its own" (Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 23).

to *amplify* the type—to expand, strengthen, or go beyond the characteristics of the type.[253] Frances Young sees typology as involving "strategies which highlight correspondences."[254] Related to correspondence, there is also the sense that the type *foreshadows* the antitype[255] and can be defined, as by Louw and Nida, by means of "a model or example which anticipates or precedes a later realization."[256] It will therefore be useful to examine some of the significant ways that Jesus and Harry Potter are similar and correspond to each other while also noting the clear component of amplification of Jesus the antitype over against Harry the type.

There is certainly evidence of Harry Potter as a Christ-figure when looking at the Gospel of Mark as a whole. However, I maintain that it is in Mark 10:32–45 that this crystallizes and becomes most prominent. Reinhartz observes that the Christ-figure elements are more often plot-driven than attributes of character.[257] I would say that the plot features, including what the characters do to advance the plot, help to reveal their

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[253] According to Leonhard Goppelt, typology concerns itself with three characteristics, only one of which is of concern for this study—amplification (Goppelt, *Typos*, 17–18). The other two characteristics are that the type and antitype are considered "historical facts" and having divine provenance and focus. These are, of course, not directly relevant to the Harry Potter literature. However, Downing suggests that there is something akin to historicity in literary figures which she calls "concrete particularity" (Downing, "Typology and the Literary Christ-figure," 23, cf. 25). To describe this in paradoxical terms, I would say there is a *fictional reality* to literary figures which relates to their existence in their own right, not only in reference to their figuration of the historical figure.

[254] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 200. Daniel Treier provides a helpful explanation of Young's theory of iconic and symbolic mimesis as follows: "An icon is supposed to direct our gaze away from itself—toward the reality represented—and fits within a larger whole, whereas a symbol draws our attention to itself but as an isolated representation which stands in place of the reality" (Treier, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis?," 96). In the same way, a small piece of *type* or a stamp does not draw attention to itself but rather points to the larger object that goes well beyond it.

[255] *Merriam-Webster*, "Antitype."

[256] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:592. This is in reference to Rom 5:14 where Adam is said to be "a type of the one who was to come." I recognize that Jesus Christ chronologically precedes the creation of the Harry Potter character but this is looking at how Harry foreshadows Jesus Christ in a literary sense. In other words, for many in the Harry Potter audience, they will know Harry Potter well and not be as familiar with Jesus.

[257] Reinhartz, "Jesus and Christ-figures," 431.

character. Their words and behaviour disclose what the characters value. This is certainly true of both Jesus and Harry Potter.

A good deal of the work on Christ-figures has been done in the area of film.[258] However, much of this is also highly relevant to literature and other forms of popular culture.[259] Lloyd Baugh has examined the use of Christ-figures in the context of films and has developed a list of eleven elements that are indicators that a character in a film is a Christ-figure. These eleven items are: dedication to justice; conflict with authorities; redemption; suffering, especially in terms of rejection; self-sacrifice; *via crucis*; resurrection or some sort of recognition after death; "mysterious origins," wonders and miracles; withdrawal to a private place to pray. [260]

The correspondences between Harry Potter and Jesus Christ for eight of the eleven Christ-figure elements will be considered when examining the Mark 10 episode. A few things can be said about them at this point but I will go into more depth with several of them throughout Chapter 4. With respect to attracting followers, Harry led Dumbledore's Army and had devoted followers.[261] Jesus' followers were with him on the journey to Jerusalem (10:32) and they are a central part of the whole episode. Harry is committed to justice and stands against those who promote racial oppression. However, he is not straightforwardly a justice advocate and is in some ways complicit in injustice. I will explore how striving for justice is amplified in Jesus who upholds values

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[258] For example, Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*; Malone, *Movie Christs and Antichrists*; Reinhartz, "Jesus and Christ-figures," 420–39.

[259] See, for example, B. J. Oropeza ("Introduction," 2, 7−10, 16) and Ken Schenk ("Superman," 33) for Christ-figure elements (salvation, redemption, resurrection) seen in the superhero genre.

[260] Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 205−10. Adele Reinhartz draws from Baugh to develop her own list (Reinhartz, "Jesus and Christ-figures," 430−31). Donald Deffner has several items on his list that overlap with Baugh's (Deffner, "Christ-figure," 278).

[261] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 312; *Deathly Hallows*, 580.

of putting others first, particularly the most vulnerable. Jesus has had conflict with authorities throughout the narrative but his words in Mark 10:42 are a particularly focused attack on how imperial rule is carried out. Harry also has conflict with authorities, such as the Ministers of Magic Cornelius Fudge and Rufus Scrimgeour. He also challenges those who abuse power, particularly Dolores Umbridge and Voldemort. The purpose of Harry's actions is often to save others.[262] Jesus' redemption and liberation of "many" will be examined with respect to Mark 10:45. In terms of suffering and rejection, Harry finds himself rejected by a number of his schoolmates on more than one occasion throughout the novels. Jesus' rejection by the authorities who turn him over to the Gentile rulers will be explored in the context of the third passion prediction. Self-sacrifice is witnessed in Harry's willingness to give up his last year at Hogwarts, something he values deeply. Self-sacrifice is also a central feature of Jesus' words on putting others first and servanthood. A *via crucis* involves a willingness to suffer and face death. I will explore in depth the *via crucis* for both Jesus and Harry Potter. Jesus predicts his resurrection in Mark 10:34 and I will consider the implications of this for the rest of the episode. For Christ-figures, this can be a metaphorical recognition after death. However, Harry actually comes back from the dead.[263]

The concept of Christ-figure is relevant to the discussion of intertextuality between the Bible and popular culture since we can see how the Gospel text has

[262] Two examples of several are when he rescued the loved ones of his teammates and when he risked his life to try to save his godfather, Sirius Black (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 435–37; *Order of the Phoenix*, 645–48).

[263] The very fact that the word "resurrection" is used in naming the "Resurrection Stone" is an indication that something akin to resurrection is in mind (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 409). Still, a distinction needs to be made between genuine resurrection and what happened to Harry. His return to life can be described more as a "resuscitation" than a resurrection (Driggers and Strawn, "Poetry," 282).

influenced popular culture works including the Harry Potter books. However, readers can then bring the popular culture work back to the biblical text to use as a lens to view the scriptures afresh. In the case of Jesus' words and ethos in the Mark 10 text, the Harry Potter lens can magnify and amplify what we find in the Gospel narrative. That is, the character of Harry Potter as Christ-figure can highlight in which ways Jesus is both similar and different and in which ways he goes beyond Harry Potter. Moreover, the Christ-figure elements seen in Mark 10:32–45 all bring out the theme of resistance. Through the use of the Harry Potter Christ-figure, therefore, an image can emerge of Jesus as a strong, justice-oriented resister and ally—someone to whom a Harry Potter fan could relate.

Conclusion

Horsley has noted that the prevalence of Jesus' presence in popular media "suggests that Jesus is alive and well in the general culture, not simply in the churches."[264] This is the case whether it is a portrayal of the actual "historical" Jesus or an allusion to Jesus through a Christ-figure. The importance of this must not be underestimated. Jesus continues to be popular. His story is standing the test of time. People like those in the Harry Potter audience will listen to this story if it is told in a way that resonates with them, allowing them to see Jesus in a more favourable light. It will therefore be beneficial to investigate how Jesus' words and actions serve to resist tyrannical rule, oppression, and empire. This message is still reflected in Christ-figures such as Harry

[264] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 3.

Potter today and is significant for bringing his words in the Mark 10 episode to life for Harry Potter readers.

Using popular culture as a lens for reading scriptural texts provides an opportunity to look at the Bible in a new way. This certainly applies to those who are relatively familiar with the biblical texts. However, it establishes a unique opportunity for those who might not have considered reading the Bible in the past. This applies to many in the Harry Potter audience. Expectations can be revised and assumptions can be transformed. In today's world, as throughout history, oppression and tyranny produce challenging circumstances for many. This is also a relevant concern for those who want to stand as allies with those who have been oppressed and marginalized. Those who find hope in popular culture works like the Harry Potter narrative would also resonate with the message of hope in the Gospel narrative. A contrapuntal reading can therefore help readers to hear a new voice in biblical stories like the one told by Mark. Such a reading can help to discover a source of resistance there. Finding examples of symbolic inversion lets Harry Potter readers turn their world on its head. This then permits them to envision and construct a new world of justice and equality like the *ekklēsia* described by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

The first step in my procedure will be to describe the social and political context of the first-century world, making use of Wink's concept of the Domination System and Scott's work on hidden transcripts and resistance. The next step will be to juxtapose the Gospel of Mark as a whole with the Harry Potter text to uncover parallels of both oppression and resistance. Finally, I will examine the Mark 10:32–45 episode using parody, irony, humour, and Alter's repetitive devices. This will again be done through

the lens of the Harry Potter narrative, in particular considering the character of Harry as a Christ-figure. Throughout this process, I will be demonstrating how the lens of Harry Potter has helped to illuminate issues of power and resistance in Mark 10:32–45. This exegetical analysis, done on behalf of the Harry Potter audience, will provide intertextual connections that will help them to expand their horizons and engage with the Markan story in an impactful way that will hopefully even inspire them to come to love the text. All of this research will be brought together to reflect on how reading the Gospel of Mark through the lens of Harry Potter can lead to a transformation of both the biblical text and the reader and thus encourage a more favourable view of the Markan Jesus.

It has become evident that there are a number of intersections between the elements and perspectives which will be used for my research. The interface between the Bible and the Harry Potter world comes together at the place where resistance to tyrannical powers flourishes and the oppressed and dominated are able to claim their voice. Exploring this interface will therefore help to address the thesis question on how today's Harry Potter audience can be given a reading strategy to help them read Mark 10:32–45 through the lens of the Harry Potter novels, one that will allow the reader to both transform and be transformed by the Markan text. The methodological tools used will encourage a reading of Mark's Gospel that highlights how Jesus acts to resist and subvert the role of tyranny in the lives of his followers—in the Gospel of Mark in general and Mark 10:32–45 in particular—much like Harry Potter does in his eponymous stories.

CHAPTER 2: POWER AND RESISTANCE: UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST-CENTURY CONTEXT

Two thousand years after the fact, the world of the first century continues to influence us today. The Roman Empire still has a significant imprint on the world we live in, to the point where some nations, like the United States, have considered themselves to be "a new Rome," while confident—perhaps overly confident—that with effort they can dodge the mistakes made by that ancient empire.[1] Another way that the first-century world has an impact is through the New Testament text. However, what is often lacking is an awareness of how the first-century world influences people, as well as a thorough or even basic understanding of what that world was like. For today's readers, reading the Markan narrative without a foundational knowledge of the context can provide some challenges. Richard Horsley observes:

> [T]o "get" more of the "whole story," to even begin to understand much of what it is about, modern Western readers desperately need to know about the historical situation from which it comes and which it addresses . . . Although we have a great deal of familiarity with bits and pieces of Mark's story simply from living in a culture in which the Bible, and especially lore about Jesus, has played a central role, we are seriously uninformed about history.[2]

In one sense, Horsley makes a valid point. There *is* a significant incongruity in context between the world of today and the world of the first century. The gap of two thousand years is a primary reason for this. Today's readers are often less familiar with the social,

[1] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 3.
[2] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 24; cf. 25.

historical, and political circumstances of the first century than they are with magic and fantasy worlds. However, to say that modern readers "desperately need to know about the historical situation" that lies behind a particular biblical text is overstating it. It is helpful but not essential for today's readers to have background information on the first-century context in which the Gospel of Mark was written. There are important parallels between the first-century world and our world today, some of which will be a focus of this study—especially oppression and resistance. Clarifying the first-century context of Palestine in the Roman Imperial world will help to draw out these parallels. This will provide a frame of reference that has the potential to enrich the modern reader's understanding of Mark's story world and inform their understanding of how the story addresses and engages with the real world of the first century. An awareness of this information will be especially useful for a teacher or guide to be aware of and to communicate it with the Harry Potter audience as appropriate and useful. Pedagogically speaking, it is like giving students of Shakespeare's plays some background concerning the time when they were written in order to help them have a fuller engagement with them. Furthermore, providing more social and historical context can challenge Harry Potter readers to revise their horizons of expectation and consider new ways of looking at things. It has the potential to help them engage with the Gospel of Mark as a text written in a context where oppression and resistance were common. The task in this chapter is therefore to explore the social and political context that would help with such an engagement.

One way to illuminate the social, political, and historical context of the first century is by doing a social description. This is one of the approaches of social scientific

biblical criticism which "help the modern reader become more knowledgeable about the ancient Mediterranean world and thus better able to comprehend an all important text that sprang from it."[3] Specifically, I will be examining first-century Palestine and in particular Galilee and Judea under Roman domination since that is the main context of the Markan narrative. The Roman Empire is, of course, the inescapable context for the whole first century for much of the world at that time and so would encompass the context of the writing of Mark's Gospel as well.[4]

In this chapter I will address the general context of Galilee and Judea under the Roman Empire as well as Roman and Jewish ideals of power and rule. An overview of first-century oppression will be followed by an investigation of resistance, including popular resistance and messianic and prophetic movements.

The Historical Context: Galilee and Judea Under the Roman Empire

The Gospel of Mark takes place in greater Judea, primarily Galilee, early in the first century CE. There were certain common characteristics of societies in the world of the Gospels. David Fiensy notes three key features of the New Testament era economy: "It was agrarian, it was aristocratic (ruled by a dominant political group), and it was a peasant society."[5] The dominant elite were in a position to be the oppressors whereas the agrarian peasants lacked power and were therefore vulnerable to oppression.

There are obstacles to mapping out life in greater Judea under the Romans. This is particularly true of Galilee which is "usually hidden from history" especially in

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[3] Neufeld and DeMaris, "Introduction," 1.
[4] I will also occasionally touch on events that occurred outside the first century as relevant.
[5] Fiensy, "Ancient Economy," 195. See also Carter, *Roman Empire*, 3.

comparison to Jerusalem and Judea.[6] There is a dearth of historical evidence to help us understand what life was like in Galilee until the beginning of the Great Revolt in 66 CE when we have Josephus's account of events occurring in this area—a relative "plethora" of information.[7] Josephus writes of Galilee in quite glowing terms, approving both of their bravery and military efforts, as well as the abundance of the land.

> The Galileans are enured to war from their infancy, and have been always very numerous; nor hath the country been ever destitute of men of courage, or wanted a numerous set of them; for their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation by its fruitfulness: accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle . . . In short, if anyone will suppose that Galilee is inferior to Perea in magnitude, he will be obliged to prefer it before it in its strength: for this is all capable of cultivation, and is everywhere fruitful.[8]

This is contrasted by the more judicious comments of Horsley, who suggests that "Galilee was not the prime object of imperial conquest" due to the ruggedness of its landscape and the shortage of nearby waterways. As such, it remained a "frontier area" of the Roman Empire, especially compared to Judea.[9]

Jesus ministered in Galilee during the time of Herod Antipas who was "a vassal dependent on Rome."[10] Leading up to this, the number and frequency of changes in who ruled over Galilee, as well as the form of the rule, from the late Second Temple period and including the Roman imperial rule, is remarkable. In just over 200 years the Galileans were governed in succession by the Seleucids, the Hasmoneans, Herod and the high priesthood of Jerusalem at the same time (both under the Romans), and finally

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[6] Horsley, *Galilee*, 111.
[7] Horsley, *Galilee*, 72.
[8] Josephus, *War* 3:42–44.
[9] Horsley, *Galilee*, 276.
[10] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 55.

Herod's son Antipas as the client ruler of Rome. Herod's significant developments and building projects, both within the area and in other parts of the empire, helped to increase the profile of Judea and Galilee. Andrew Overman observes, "It is fair to suggest that Herod's activities as a builder and provincial power serves as an apt summary or short course on precisely how development, regional power, and romanization occurred in the east."[11] Antipas rebuilt the city of Sepphoris and constructed the capital city of Tiberias, thus advancing the process of urbanization under the Romans within a twenty year period. These developments and the particular ruler governing at any given time had important ramifications for the people of Galilee.[12] The establishment of the two cities, especially because this occurred within such a short span of time, would have had lasting effects in terms of the cultural and societal influence on Galilee, including the location of power.[13] The Herodian rulers were able to introduce some significant elements of Greek culture into the area but stopped short of certain things that would not have been tolerated by the Jewish people, such as gymnasia or the associated ephebates (centres of training in Greek culture).[14] Thereafter, until the second half of the first century, the client rulers administering Galilee on behalf of Rome ruled from Sepphoris and Tiberius.[15] Since the peasants in the surrounding villages saw the fruit of their labour (in the form of tribute) going to the rulers in these cities, there was

[11] Overman, "Between Rome and Parthia," 281. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 16:142–49.

[12] Horsley, *Galilee*, 11, 126. It should be noted that Galilee had been subordinate to the Jerusalem priesthood and temple state for the century before Jesus' birth, although it was not *directly* controlled by them during his lifetime (Horsley, *Galilee*, 130).

[13] Horsley, *Galilee*, 119–20.

[14] Marshall and Martin, "Government and Public Law," 419.

[15] Horsley, *Galilee*, 111.

significant resentment directed toward them which emerged more fully in hostilities occurring against those very places during the revolt of 66–67 CE.[16]

Client rulers were a key means by which Rome controlled Judea and Galilee. Herod the Great was a client ruler who governed with a heavy hand and, according to Horsley, this meant there was less need for Rome to occupy greater Judea with military forces. Nevertheless, a pronounced increase in resistance after his death led to the posting of troops in the area. Overall, Horsley suggests that the presence of Roman soldiers in Galilee at the time of Jesus was not as "ubiquitous" as is often presumed.[17] On the other hand, Susan Mattern observes that the Roman Empire as a military occupier is becoming more a focus of scholarly attention and that Rome had a strong military presence in Judea and Galilee, albeit particularly in times of revolt as Horsley has specified.[18] In general, therefore, the main point of agreement between the two, and one which is relevant for the purposes of this study, is that military occupation increased during times of revolt. The Roman objective was to keep resistance in check by having a presence in the occupied territory. A client ruler would be one way to display such a presence. However, if that proved insufficient, more military troops were brought in.

The nature of the Roman Empire is important for understanding who the people of Galilee and Judea were subject to. Throughout the scope of its existence, it is estimated that a total of up to 65 million people came under the umbrella of this empire, including people of a variety of ethnic origins and economic statuses. It was centred on a

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[16] Horsley, *Galilee*, 278–79.

[17] Horsley, *Galilee*, 116–17.

[18] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 101–2. However, elsewhere Horsley describes the presence of Roman armies and their devastating effects in the time just before Jesus' birth (Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 15).

pronounced hierarchy, and values such as domination and power were admired and celebrated.[19]

The ideals and conditions of the Pax Romana were central to the Roman imperial system. The time of Augustus was seen to be the turning point toward achieving Pax Romana, although there were signs of it already before him.[20] There were a number of benefits of the Pax Romana. These included security of one's possessions, the resolution of internal disputes, freedom, and culture.[21] There were also economic advantages such as infrastructure, goods, and produce.[22] Some of these also benefitted those in the lower classes, although this was often done to appease them, in the form of bread and circuses. Klaus Wengst describes it as follows: "No war devastated the land and destroyed the cities; arts and crafts could unfold and agriculture develop; vines were grown even by the Rhine; trade and commerce flourished; new cities came into being, and old ones were redeveloped in splendour; the same law applied everywhere."[23] The Pax Romana and its benefits made it so many Jews could move around the empire freely and develop their businesses, as well as their social presence, in synagogues and other organizations in the communities where they settled.[24] Furthermore, the Pax Romana contributed to a situation that allowed for the gospel to proliferate throughout the empire and beyond.[25]

However, there were also serious drawbacks to the Pax Romana, most of which can be addressed by asking the question: At what cost? For example, economic benefits

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[19] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 3, 8.
[20] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 8.
[21] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 19–21, 22–24, 40–44.
[22] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 26–37.
[23] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 8.
[24] Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 101.
[25] Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 234–35.

that came to some were at the cost of exploiting others through human labour, plundering, taxes and tributes, and slavery. The type of peace brought by Pax Romana is well illustrated by a coin put out during the time of Trajan with the goddess Pax stepping on the head of a conquered enemy.[26] It is therefore a peace brought about by subjection. A speech by Calgacus of Britain, as described by the historian Tacitus, expresses well what many in subjugated nations were experiencing at the hands of the Romans and how the idea of "peace" had been distorted: "Plunderers of the world, after they, laying everything waste, ran out of land, they search out the sea: if the enemy is wealthy, they are greedy; if he is poor they seek prestige . . . Robbery, butchery, rapine they call empire by euphemisms, and when they produce a wasteland, they call it peace."[27] Tacitus also tells of those in a Celtic tribe "who dreaded the Peace of Rome."[28] Moreover, the Pax Romana was not a permanent or ubiquitous peace. By the year 69 CE, the whole Roman Empire "was ablaze and at war."[29] This included a civil war. The use of military force was part of Pax Romana's system of violence.[30] Rome also responded with violence to those who resisted.[31] Thus, it would be better to say it was "a pacified world" rather than a peaceful world.[32]

Through its policies, the Roman Empire shaped economic conditions, health, and availability of necessities especially for those with less to begin with. This led to

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[26] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 12.
[27] Tacitus, *Agric*. 30.
[28] Tacitus, *Ann*. 12.33.2.
[29] Reicke, *New Testament Era,* 110.
[30] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 4. Wengst maintains that Jesus' death and resurrection interrupt that violent system and bring true peace and reconciliation.
[31] One example is recorded by Tacitus: "Having then scourged with fire and sword all whom he knew to be hostile" (Tacitus, *Ann*. 14.26.1).
[32] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 55.

widespread malnutrition, ill health, and poverty.[33] "Wealth or its lack, food or its lack, and health or its lack comprise three everyday expressions of the Roman imperial system."[34] These oppressive economic practices, along with excessive taxation and their "ruthless" responses to resistance, help to characterize the Roman Empire as a tyrannical regime.[35]

Oppressive practices were also seen in how Roman culture was disseminated. The Roman historian Tacitus reports that there were those in Britain who were attracted to certain aspects of Roman culture, not realizing that this was actually a part of their subjection and enslavement.[36] With respect to religion, Rome's objective was to bring all other religions under the umbrella of the emperor cult and to use military force if it was needed to bring this about.[37] This was therefore a form of cultural imperialism.

The benefits and splendour achieved by the Pax Romana were noteworthy. The response of amazement of one of Jesus' disciples witnessing the "large stones and . . . large buildings" of the temple is therefore not surprising (Mark 13:1). This is probably similar to many reactions to the splendour of Rome throughout the empire and, indeed, throughout history.[38] Jesus, however, declares that it would "all be thrown down" (13:2),

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[33] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 116–17.

[34] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 119.

[35] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 3–4.

[36] Tacitus, *Agric*. 21.

[37] Warmind, "Cult of the Roman Emperor," 219. It should be noted that force was not always necessary for this to happen. In some of the provinces, especially Asia, the imperial cult was even more important than in Rome because it "provided a presence for an absent emperor" (Aune, "Religion," 923).

[38] I think here of the response of my own parents when reflecting back on Hitler's Germany. They were both ethnic Germans living in other European countries during WWII. My mother would talk about how, although Hitler did a lot of terrible things, which they did not know about at the time, he also did a lot of good for Germany in terms of improving infrastructure and reviving the economy. My father denied that there was any genocide of Jews. The concentration camps were just work camps to him. In other words, Hitler was by some remembered for the good he did and less so for the suffering he caused. I would note, however, that Germany has made notable efforts to recognize the Holocaust and to reconcile (Rienzi, "Other Nations").

indicating it was not an enduring splendour. Thus, while there were advantages to the Pax Romana, they came at the cost of exploitation and suffering. It is quite apparent that the Roman imperial world was based on a system of absolute power rather than empowerment. In this system, all five of Young's categories of oppression are seen: exploitation, marginalization, taking away power from subordinate peoples, cultural imperialism, and violence. This, in turn, illuminates the situation of the Galileans as a people living under a system of oppression, which will give context for the New Testament reader in terms of the resistance that is a response to that oppression.

Social Location in the Gospel of Mark

In order to gain a better understanding of the background of the Gospel of Mark, it will be helpful to be aware of the social location of the people who are portrayed in the Markan narrative. Social location refers to a person or group's position or social level within a human stratification system. [39] This system can also be referred to as a "social pyramid" due to its hierarchical arrangement.[40] Richard Rohrbaugh identifies several social levels when examining characters in the Gospel of Mark including the following: the urban elite, the urban nonelite, so-called "expendables," and peasants.[41] The latter two categories would have had a preponderance of marginalized people. Concerning those who were considered "[u]nclean, degraded, and expendables," they are frequently mentioned in the Gospel of Mark even though they represented a low percentage of the population of that time.[42]

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[39] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 143.
[40] Neyrey, "Social Location," 126.
[41] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location."
[42] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 151.

Roman Ideals and Practices Concerning Power and Rule

The Roman Empire did not appear in a vacuum. The imperial world that existed had an ideological foundation that had developed over centuries. Rome often used ideology more effectively than force to achieve an imperial dictatorship. This involved imperial propaganda; things like religious festivals and victory celebrations were used to capture people's attentions and help shape public opinion.[43] The concept of victory was quite central to this. Victory was a clear manifestation that the existence of the Roman Empire was the will of the gods and that Rome had been given possession of those they had conquered. The people of Rome therefore believed that victory gave them the divine right to continue expanding their empire.[44]

The Roman Republic, the historical period that preceded the empire, was characterized by certain ideals. According to Adam Winn, the Roman Republic was intended to eliminate tyrannical rule but the dynastic rule of the later Republic meant that Rome could be controlled by only one powerful person, that being Julius Caesar (ruled 49–44 BCE) along with his successors.[45] An astute leader would be aware of the political sensibilities of the general public who still very much valued the ideals of the Republic. Winn makes a distinction between "Roman political ideology" which he sees as referring to the general populace and "Roman imperial ideology" referring to the ideology of the emperors.[46]

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[43] Fears, "Rome," 102.

[44] Fears, "Rome," 99. Josephus asserted that God was on the side of the "invincible" power of Rome and that those who opposed this all-powerful empire were not "lovers of liberty" (Josephus, *War* 5:364–68).

[45] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 330.

[46] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 326n3.

There were certain expectations of leaders. Dio Chrysostom presented the ideal of a ruler serving his subjects and being concerned with their welfare.[47] This kind of leader "honours and loves the good, yet extends his care to all.[48] The Stoic Epictetus described the model leader as one who was willing to take on personal hardship[49] and to sacrifice what was of greatest value.[50] Historian Cassius Dio offered the following counsel to rulers:

> You must rely on your own good deeds in order to add to your lustre in any way. You should never allow gold or silver images to be made of yourself, for not only are they expensive, but they positively invite conspiracy and last only for a short while. Rather than this, you should build images of yourself in the hearts of your people, and the substance from which these are made should be your own good deeds, which should prove unalloyed and imperishable. Equally, you should never allow a temple to be built in your honour, for it is futile to spend huge sums on projects of this kind.[51]

The ideal Roman ruler was a selfless benefactor, one concerned for the needs of the people. This could be described as an empowering leader. However, this was the ideal. Whether or not this was ever really exhibited in an actual ruler is open to debate. Nonetheless, there was movement away from even having this as the ideal during the imperial era.

Several rulers of the empire period fall considerably short of the ideal leader of the Republic. Indeed, several of them were known to be tyrants focused on themselves rather than the people. They not only accepted monuments built in their honour and worship as gods, but actually *sought and commissioned* these honours. They also failed

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[47] Dio Chrysostom, *Disc.* 1:12, 34; cf. Seeley, "Rulership and Service," 236.
[48] Dio Chrysostom, *Disc.* 1:17.
[49] Epictetus, *Disc*. 3:24:64–65; cf. Seeley, "Rulership and Service," 243–44.
[50] Epictetus, *Disc*. 4:8:30–32.
[51] Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 52:35.

to listen to the voice of the people and oppressed them.[52] Julius Caesar permanently took on the dictatorship as well as other titles and honours that were considered "greater than were appropriate for a human being."[53] Caligula (37–41 CE) was one of the Roman emperors who considered himself *supra leges* (above the law). He therefore felt justified in perpetrating appalling injustices against people for his own purposes and amusement.[54] He practiced murder and rape with impunity, as well as many other acts of oppression and humiliation against both the nobility and the general public.[55] Seneca described him as "a man so greedy for human blood, that he ordered it to be shed in his sight as if he were going to drink it."[56] While not as extreme as Caligula, accusations of corruption and cruelty would also be made of Nero (54–68 CE).[57] Both practiced excessive and wasteful spending, particularly for themselves but also their friends.[58] According to Winn, these kinds of excesses, as well as their grasping for titles and honours, often contributed to their identification as tyrants and their eventual failure as rulers.[59] They ruled with an exploitative and oppressive kind of power

Winn suggests that there were some emperors who rejected any appearance of absolute power because they were concerned about appearing to follow the monarchial practices of Eastern nations such as Egypt and Persia and thereby transgressing the Roman sensibilities.[60] Suetonius reports that Augustus was emphatic in communicating

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[52] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 333, 335.
[53] Suetonius, *Jul*. 76:1.
[54] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 337. Josephus wrote that Caligula considered "himself to be a god" (*War* 2:184).
[55] Suetonius, *Cal*. 23–26.
[56] Seneca, *Ben*. 4.31.2.
[57] Suetonius, *Nero* 32–35.
[58] Suetonius, *Cal.* 37; *Nero* 30–31.
[59] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 332, 337.
[60] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 332.

that he wished to avoid certain honours including titles, statues, and the dictatorship.[61] He also refused to let people call him *dominus* (Lord).[62] Claudius (41–54 CE) was another Roman emperor who "refused excessive honors" for himself.[63] Suetonius states that Tiberius (14–37 CE) refused certain titles but also that there was evidence that this was predominantly done for show. He writes of Tiberius that "for a long time he continued to play an insolent game by refusing the title."[64] Both Augustus and Claudius were considered to be generous benefactors.[65] The Stoic philosopher Seneca contrasts the rule of the evil tyrant Gaius Caligula with that of his honourable ancestors. Thus, while he acknowledges the existence of tyrannical rule, he also shows that a more noble form of leadership is conceivable. He says of such rulers that their primary concern was for justice and the common good.[66]

These particular emperors, at least in these instances, are not apparently grasping or hanging on to absolute, exploitative power. To use my own phrase from the title of this work ("Laying Aside the Elder Wand"), they are *laying aside* this power. This is similar to the practice of *recusatio* which can be defined as a strategy that included "resisting or protesting all realities that might convey one's possession of absolute power, but . . . did not involve the surrender of any true power."[67] It should be noted that there were accusations that some were using *recusatio* as a form of false humility in order to provide a cover for their true motives of tyrannical dictatorship.[68] This is an

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[61] Suetonius, *Aug*. 52.
[62] Suetonius, *Aug*. 53.1.
[63] Suetonius, *Claud*. 12:1.
[64] Suetonius, *Tib*. 24:1.
[65] Suetonius, *Aug*. 28:3–31:5; 41; *Claud*. 18–20.
[66] Seneca, *Ben*. 4.32.2, 4; cf. Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 339.
[67] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 331.
[68] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 334.

important qualifier. John Lobur presents the irony of the situation: in his refusal to take on the dictatorship, Augustus demonstrated his dedication to honour the republican ideals of the past and "thereby became more authoritative than any *dictator*."[69]

An inquiry into the Roman ideology of power and rule will be useful for later examining what Mark 10:32–45 has to say about tyrants and gentile rulers. The Romans had certain ideals of leadership that incorporated the concepts of just and beneficent rule. It seems, in theory at least, that there were seeds of tradition which upheld something akin to using power for the good of others. However, in practice there were a number of emperors who could well be identified as tyrants whose main pattern of leadership involved oppressive power. Even some of those who were benefactors in practice had their own best interests at the forefront. In upcoming chapters, I will be exploring how well the Markan Jesus does at fulfilling the Roman political ideals.

Jewish Attitudes Concerning Resistance

Many of the perspectives that the Jewish people had concerning power structures, oppression, and resistance came from their history and traditions. They saw God as the one who had liberated their people from slavery and oppression in Egypt and the celebration of this event in the annual Passover festival was a central part of their lives. During the time of Jesus, the covenantal values, esteemed prophecies, and traditions they drew from their history were still very much in the forefront of the memory of the people.[70] There was a tradition of prophets resisting, speaking truth to power through

[69] Lobur, *Consensus*, 31. Emphasis in original.
[70] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 160.

oracles, and even (in the case of Elijah and Elisha) advancing oppositional movements.[71] These prophets spoke for the common people and peasants and did not shy away from condemning the priesthood for disregarding the law and exploiting people.[72]

In the second century BCE, there was a struggle against Antiochus Epiphanes who was considered by the people to be an oppressive tyrant because he had initiated an intensive Hellenization effort.[73] This program of enforced Hellenization included religious persecution which would have been particularly repugnant to the Jewish people.[74] The Hasmoneans successfully rebelled against Antiochus and the Seleucids, culminating in the purification of the Temple.[75] This event was commemorated annually by the people at the festival of the Dedication (1 Macc 4:59; John 10:22). The story of this resistance thus lived on in the people's memories.

Adela Yarbro Collins explores Jewish attitudes of resistance in the Second Temple period, particularly resistance to how the temple was run and toward the Roman Empire. She notes that "the Covenanters [Essenes] supported the temple cult in principle, but had no great affection or loyalty to the current temple building. In fact, if they had had the power and the resources, they would have removed the current structure and replaced it with their ideal temple."[76] There is evidence in the Damascus Document, written sometime before 70 CE, that the Essenes challenged the conduct of priests, whom they claimed fell into three traps: "fornication . . . riches, and . . .

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[71] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 141,143. The prophet Samuel is another one who speaks truth to power.

[72] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 144–45.

[73] Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 52.

[74] 1 Macc 1:44–55; 2 Macc 6:1–9; cf. Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 54–57.

[75] 1 Macc 3:10–4:58; cf. Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 58.

[76] Yarbro Collins, "Second Temple," 121. See also 11Q19, 11Q21. See also 11Q29 concerning the new, enduring temple sanctuary created and endorsed by God.

profanation of the Temple."[77] However, much of the resistance of the Essenes was kept hidden. Josephus comments on this secrecy by saying that a member of the Essenes "will neither conceal anything from those of his own sect, nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though any one should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life."[78] Yarbro Collins rightly observes that this fits Scott's idea of a hidden transcript.[79] On the other hand, she points out that many Jews, including the Essenes and at one point even Josephus, were at times involved in "open rebellion against Rome."[80]

In the Jewish tradition, God was considered the only ruler and king of Israel—others were not deemed to have this supreme status and the people had been warned of the corruption and tyrannical rule of kings.[81] All of this would have contributed to a mindset of openness, among many of the people Jesus ministered to, to resisting and condemning unjust rulers and authorities, including the high priesthood and the Roman Empire. Their traditions did not honour tyrannical power nor exploitative and manipulative oppression.

Oppression in the First-Century Context

The history and traditions of the Jewish people, as well as their present circumstances under Rome, would have influenced how they saw themselves in relation to their Roman colonizers.[82] As part of this perspective, Horsley suggests that the Gospel of Mark is "a

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[77] D 4:12; cf. Yarbro Collins, "Second Temple," 119; 119n23.
[78] Josephus, *War* 2:141.
[79] Yarbro Collins, "Second Temple," 121–22.
[80] Yarbro Collins, "Second Temple," 129.
[81] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 83. See Josh 8:22–23; 1 Sam 8:4–18.
[82] Other colonies had experiences and responses that were both similar and different to the Palestinian circumstances. The province of Asia Minor also experienced significant oppression during its initial interactions with Rome, including aggressive exploitation and heavy taxes, leading to a revolt taking place from 88 to 85 BCE. However, the rule of Augustus was seen to bring with it a relief to this

story about subjected people"—people of first-century Palestine living under the domination of the Roman Empire.[83] It is important to hear the story as such and therefore to understand the oppressive elements of the context of this narrative. Warren Carter points out that James Scott's three categories of domination—material, status, and ideological domination—are useful in describing the world of the Roman Empire.[84] These overlap with Young's categories of oppression—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence—all of which can be seen in how imperial Rome interacts with its subjects.[85] The Roman Empire's use of oppressive powers demonstrates the appropriateness for classifying it as a part of Wink's "Domination System."[86]

It is important to identify the oppressor when addressing the subject of oppression. Imperial Rome was of course the oppressor. However, its client rulers such as the Herodian monarchs as well as the temple state associated with the Jerusalem high priesthood were also involved in oppressing the people of first-century Palestine.[87] Moreover, these were not the first oppressors. There was a history of oppression of the Jews in Palestine, their persecution by the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes in the

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oppressive period, and the growth of the imperial cult in Asia attests to this. As this was followed by increased prosperity as well as significant cultural and civic benefits during the first two centuries CE, there was a much more congenial relationship with Rome than there was in Palestine (Calder et al., "Asia," 182–83). Another notable difference with Asia Minor was the extent of their participation in the emperor cult which was also used successfully in other areas such as Africa, Spain, and Gaul as a "political expedient to weld the far-flung dominions of Rome into a unified empire" (Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1:452). This, of course, would not have been the case in Palestine. In Britain, there was resistance against Rome including the uprising led by Queen Boudicca in 60 or 61 CE. This rebellion was suppressed, although it helped to slow the Roman expansion for several years (Frere, *Britannia*, 88–95; Millett, "Britain," 251).

[83] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, xiii.

[84] Carter, "James C. Scott," 82; Scott, *Domination*, 198.

[85] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 93–102.

[86] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 9.

[87] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 38. The name of Herod "stands in Jewish and Christian traditions as a symbol of oppressive tyranny" (Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 31).

second century BCE being a perfect example. He forced them "to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God" as well as defiling the Temple (2 Macc 6:1–2; cf. 1 Macc 1:44, 49–50)—a form of cultural imperialism. He also violently suppressed any resistance to these harsh measures.[88]

The word "oppressive" is an apt term to describe the economic burden of taxation on the peasants of Galilee and Judea. It was through taxation that Herod was able to accumulate vast tracts of land and fund the implementation of excessive construction projects including his own court, to the point where the people were seen to be "taxed to death" and Herod's gain "gotten by bloodshed."[89] Temple taxes were also required by the Jerusalem priesthood.[90] Added to these was the Roman tribute, required to be paid every year.[91] In effect, this meant that peasant farmers were paying over 40 percent of the fruits of their labour in taxes as well as facing indebtedness and loss of family land.[92] Failure to pay the tribute was punished severely. With all this it is no wonder that taxation was considered a form of enslavement.[93] Roman taxation was made even harsher after the Jewish War of 66–73 CE, with a two-drachma tax put on the Jewish people.[94] This was definitely a form of exploitation, appropriating the hard-earned products of people's labour, and would also be considered material domination.

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[88] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 16.

[89] Josephus, *War* 1:524; cf. 2:85–86; *Ant*. 17:304–10; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 32; *Jesus and Empire*, 33. David Rhoads comments that Herod "bled the populace poor" with the significant tax payments he demanded (Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution*, 24).

[90] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 56.

[91] Josephus, *Ant*. 14:202–3.

[92] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 56; Horsley, *Galilee*, 60.

[93] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 57. Roman taxation was experienced and viewed differently in Asia Minor. Especially for rural peasants and smaller property owners, "it signified little to them whether the payments were made to the Roman tax-collector or to the representative of the king" (Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1:159).

[94] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 138n74; 139.

The brutality of the Roman Empire is also seen in their enslavement of large numbers of people. For example, during the first century BCE 30,000 were taken into slavery at one time in Galilee which was not unusual for the Romans. On other occasions during this period whole cities were enslaved.[95]

Humiliation and intimidation were other tactics used by imperial Rome. Acts of cultural imperialism produce humiliation for those who are the targets. They are attempts to force subordinated peoples to accept practices that go against their deeply held cultural and religious values. The culture and experiences of the privileged group are considered to be ideal and the norm.[96] Instances of this by the Roman imperial authorities included compelling colonized people to worship Roman military banners and Pilate bringing standards with Caesar's image to Jerusalem.[97] Intimidation tactics were also not uncommon, such as posting an armed regiment during Jewish festivals in Jerusalem.[98]

It is clear there was a Roman proclivity for "brutally oppressive measures." This was especially true when the people resisted.[99] Roman responses to resistance and revolt included military invasion, takeover of the area, and sometimes genocide.[100] One example of the tyrannical mindset of the empire was "the zeal with which Romans massacred rebellious populations."[101] Thus, not only did the Roman Empire aim to

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[95] Josephus, *Ant*. 14:120, 272–75; Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 153.
[96] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 100.
[97] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 31; Josephus, *War* 2:169–71.
[98] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:106–7; Horsley, "Politics of Disguise," 74–75.
[99] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 101, 191; cf. 192.
[100] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 120. Other examples of people groups slaughtered in response to rebellion around this time were the Bastarnae in central Europe and the people living in the Rhine area whom Germanicus attempted to annihilate. This continued for centuries, thus exhibiting a pattern of how Rome responded to resistance.
[101] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 193.

intimidate and humiliate subjected peoples, it also endeavoured to terrorize them. Terrorization was, in effect, "Roman imperial policy."[102] Horsley declares: "There is no way we can understand such practices as crucifixon, mass slaughter and enslavement, massacres of whole towns and annihilation of whole peoples, other than as purposeful attempts to terrorize subjected peoples."[103] It is to crucifixion I turn next, in order to treat this particular form of Roman oppression more thoroughly.

Crucifixion

It is important to understand the actual context of crucifixion, because people both within and outside the Christian faith often consider crucifixion and the cross in a somewhat benign manner, as a symbol in or on churches that is frequently taken for granted or something that people wear as jewelry. This is far from taking into account the real circumstances and historical significance of crucifixion. It will also be relevant for better comprehending what Jesus was communicating in his passion predictions, since he discusses his approaching death. In the passion predictions Jesus reveals that he knows he is going to be killed by Gentiles (Mark 10:33–34), which would be referring to the Romans. Therefore, according to Mark, Jesus knew the manner in which he would die—crucifixion.

Crucifixion was generally used for those who were considered rebellious or resistant to the Roman Empire. Josephus provides several examples that show that many of those crucified were Jewish rebels and insurrectionists as well as those who caused

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[102] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire,* 156n14.
[103] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire,* 27.

havoc for the empire.[104] This could indicate that Jesus would also have been viewed as a threat to the empire in some way.[105] As I will demonstrate later in this chapter as well as in Chapters 4 and 5, Jesus was resistant to empire in his words and actions. The fact that the Gospel of Mark points out that he was crucified between two social bandits (not robbers) in 15:27, in itself provides some evidence that he was considered in a similar category—that he was to some extent associated with them.[106] The crime for which he was crucified ("The King of the Jews") could also suggest that Jesus was perceived as a threat. The title "The King of the Jews" was used by the Romans to identify his crime and this epithet was reinforced by the mocking of the Roman soldiers (15:16–18) as well as the scribes and chief priests (15:32).[107] However, while there is some support for Jesus being perceived as a threat by Rome, there is also evidence within the Gospel itself that indicates otherwise. Pilate did not want to execute Jesus and knew he was innocent (15:10, 14). Yet he nevertheless had him crucified. He may have considered Jesus to be more of a disturber of the peace than an actual threat.

The brutality of crucifixion is one of its most defining characteristics. It certainly fits in the category of violent oppression. Martin Hengel describes crucifixion as "obscene" and "utterly offensive."[108] Multitudes of people in Judea were cruelly tortured and executed.[109] Crucifixion was intended by the Roman Empire to bring shame and humiliation—a "loss of honor."[110] It was also intended to intimidate, terrorize, and

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[104] Josephus, *Ant* 17:295; 20:129; *War* 2:75; 3:320–321; 5:289. See also Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 47.

[105] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 131–32; Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 141. Carter observes: "People got crucified not because they were spiritual, but because they posed a threat to the Roman system" (Carter, *Roman Empire*, x).

[106] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 48, 256.

[107] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 168.

[108] Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 22.

[109] Josephus, *Ant*. 17:295; *War* 2:75, 253; 5:449−451; 7:202–203.

[110] Neyrey, "Despising the Shame," 113.

oppress whole groups of people, keeping them in line.[111] Christians, likely including those in the Markan audience, were able to be reconciled with the concept that the Messiah had experienced a shameful crucifixion and, indeed, came to see it as a sign of honour.[112] However, this does not diminish the fact that the intent of the Roman crucifixion was to oppress, torture, humiliate, tyrannize, and execute those who were perceived to stand in the way of the empire. The reality of the systematic oppression carried out by the Roman authorities, including but not limited to crucifixion, then provides a context for why there would be resistance against the Roman Empire.

Resistance

Resistance is, by definition, against something. In the context of colonized territories of the Roman Empire, popular resistance was against tyrannical and oppressive forms of power, and these powers would invariably respond back with more persecution. There is therefore a strong connection between oppression and the act of resistance. Horsley and Hanson highlight this pattern by illustrating how the Romans would slaughter any peasants that surrendered whereas the elites and those with power were put in positions of leadership if they surrendered. This served to increase discontent among the people.[113]

In exploring resistance in the first century, it is important to recognize that there were both violent and nonviolent forms of resistance at play. Both types of resistance indicate that there was a felt need by many in Jewish society to challenge and oppose in

[111] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 15, 27.
[112] Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 346; Neyrey, "Despising the Shame."
[113] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 220–29.

various ways those whom they perceived as their oppressors and who were making their lives more difficult through practices like excessive taxation, enslavement, destruction of towns, and slaughtering groups of people.

For Galileans, there was more than one target for the resistance. Villagers tended to view the elite rulers and their retainers in the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias with deep hostility, particularly as the time came closer to the Jewish War (66–73 CE).[114] There was also antagonism toward the Romans. In most areas of Galilee, apart from the cities of Tiberias and Sepporis, there was a willingness to oppose the Romans even in battle. They fortified their cities and made preparations to fight Vespasian and his forces.[115] Josephus observed that the Galileans "have always been able to make a strong resistance on all occasions of war."[116] Much of this would have stemmed from incidents in the recent past of Galilee as well as Perea and Judea. The Jewish peasants would have preserved the memory of the burning of Sepphoris by the Romans as well as the enslavement of many of its population in 4 BCE. The destruction of Emmaus would also have been known.

Hendrika Roskam downplays the existence of "a general anti-Roman disposition among the people in Galilee" and argues against any cohesive resistance against the Romans by the Galileans.[117] She also goes out of her way to emphasize that Mark was

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[114] Horsley, *Galilee*, 279. This is referring specifically to the elite of the Galilean cities and their retainers. The Pharisees, whether or not they were actually the retainers or representatives of the Jerusalem priesthood, were most likely considered influential by the people (Mason, "Pharisaical Dominance," 367, 370). Josephus observes that "the Pharisees have the multitude on their side" (Josephus, *Ant.* 13:298; cf. 13:288). This would have been after the time of Jesus. However, the Gospel of Mark was likely written some time around these dates (66–73 CE).

[115] Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution*, 176.

[116] Josephus, *War* 3:41–42.

[117] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 131, 134. It is possible that Roskam has misunderstood the following statement by Horsley since she makes reference to his book *Galilee* elsewhere in her own: "It is clear… that there was no unifying ideology and no coherent, let alone unified, anti-Roman 'revolt' in

attempting to demonstrate that Jesus was not being subversive.[118] This is perplexing for two reasons. First, Roskam herself acknowledges that the first-century Christians in Galilee were likely oppressed, persecuted, and handed over to the Roman authorities, making it more likely that there would be resistance.[119] It is also puzzling considering the amount of evidence of resistance in the Gospels, including of course in the Gospel of Mark.[120] Here again, it is useful to make a distinction between violent and nonviolent resistance. Roskam seems to have a particular understanding of subversiveness that does not include nonviolent or hidden resistance, the kind of resistance I will demonstrate is central in the Gospel of Mark. It would perhaps therefore be more appropriate for Roskam to use the term "rebellious" or "revolutionary" rather than "subversive" to describe the characteristic she suggests that Mark is endeavouring to dispute in terms of Jesus and the early Christians.[121]

To offset Roskam's argument that there was no real revolutionary activity on the part of the people of Galilee toward the Romans, Josephus refers to an army of 100,000 Galileans formed during the Jewish Revolt.[122] While Susan Mattern comments that this number is implausible, she also observes that this army was brought together to combat a Roman force of 50,000 troops. So, while Josephus's number may have been exaggerated, the point remains that the Romans felt the need to have 50,000 troops to

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Galilee in 66–67 C.E. There were rather a number of interrelated conflicts, most of them local or regionally based." (Horsley, *Galilee*, 87). If this is the case she does not take into account the "number of interrelated conflicts."

[118] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 146, 167, 170.

[119] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 136, 139.

[120] I will explore resistance in the Gospel of Mark more fully in the next two chapters.

[121] Roskam notes that Mark wants to clear Jesus of the accusation "of having been an insurrectionist"—another term that would be more apt in this situation rather than "subversive" (Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 207).

[122] Josephus, *War* 2:575–76.

suppress a revolt in the area. Their response was to use many more troops than were necessary in order to viciously quash any resistance and thereby assert their power. The Roman acts of subduing resistance using large numbers of troops were also carried out in Judea. In general, they were inclined to use "brutally repressive measures" in response to resistance and revolt, thereby providing evidence for the existence of that resistance. [123] It was a vicious cycle of oppression and resistance. Another example of this type of suppression right around the time of Jesus can be seen in the actions of Pilate, governor of Judea from 26–36 CE. On various occasions where the people came to him with petitions or more emphatic protests and outcries, he responded by immediately unleashing his soldiers on them.[124]

Popular Resistance and Banditry

Banditry and other popular resistance movements also became widespread in Palestine during the first century.[125] The Pax Romana and its "profound peace" was associated with the elimination of banditry, or "brigandage."[126] There were concerted efforts to supress banditry whenever it arose. For example, weapons were seized from those who were suspected to have been involved in insurgent activities in Egypt.[127] However, the very fact that these kinds of resistance activities needed to be suppressed is evidence that they were ongoing, although they became more pronounced at certain times. For

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[123] Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 101–2; cf. 191. Mattern also points out that there was a greater likelihood of rebellion in areas that had recently been conquered. Carter aptly describes how "Rome's military retaliation was inevitable and ruthless" (Mattern, *Roman Empire*, 4).

[124] Josephus, *Ant*. 18:55–62; *War* 2:169–77.

[125] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xvi.

[126] Epictetus, *Diss*. 3:13:9.

[127] Philo, *Flacc*. 11:92–93. See also Ramsay MacMullen, who cites this as evidence that "[c]ontinual efforts were made to keep brigandage in check (MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 256).

example, Josephus reports that the Judean province was inundated with bandits during the time of Nero to the point that the procurator Felix had a hard time keeping up with them, although he captured and executed them on a regular basis.[128]

The works of Josephus are the main sources of information concerning popular resistance for the times adjacent to the life of Jesus and the writing of the Gospel of Mark. In addition, Jewish peasant activity was reported in the Gospels themselves which gives us another source for understanding popular resistance.[129] In the earlier part of his ministry, Jesus interacted predominantly with peasants in the villages of Galilee. The very fact of Jesus' constant proximity to peasants helps shed light on his ministry and message; his ministry was to peasants and his message was about them. Peasants therefore provided the context for his activities and understanding them and their motivation helps us to better understand the Gospels.[130] However, whether peasants were a significant part of the resistance movements, including banditry, as Horsley and Hanson maintain, is a question that has been the focus of much debate. One of the difficulties lies with the fact that most of the evidence of resistance movements comes from the elite, and likely biased, source of Josephus and there are no peasant sources. There is therefore no clear substantiation for the theory that there was discontent among Jewish peasants toward the ruling classes.[131] Moreover, there is evidence that there were at least some elite among the resistance movements.[132] Thomas Grünewald proposes

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[128] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:160–61. See also Reicke who calls them "anarchists" (Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 207).

[129] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xviii.

[130] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xxiii–xxiv, 1.

[131] Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 459.

[132] For example, John Kloppenborg points out that John of Gischala was a property owner who was able to provide the people with oil (Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 467; cf. Josephus, *Life*, 43–45, 74–75).

that a relatively small percentage of bandits would have been peasants and that people from a variety of backgrounds would have participated in the resistance movements.[133] However, Grünewald also recognizes that the poverty and difficult circumstances characteristic of a peasant life would have been "one of the driving forces behind the insurgency movements, but only one among many."[134] Kloppenborg acknowledges that "political unrest and economic pressures due to famine, plague, poor harvests, taxes and onerous liturgies might result in banditry."[135] Yet these are things that would be especially associated with the life of those considered to be in the lower or peasant classes. I agree with both Kloppenborg and Grünewald that there is not enough evidence to show that peasants composed the majority of those involved in banditry or other insurgent movements. However, the same shortage of evidence precludes a definite determination that peasants were only a small proportion in those movements. One can therefore conclude that there were peasants involved in resistance movements, but that we do not have the evidence to establish what the percentage would have been.

It is beneficial to recognize what was in the history and memory of the Jewish people concerning resistance to oppressors. In the collective memory of these peasants, there was a time when their ancestors had been free of the domination of imperial rule.[136] They also had a history of prophets such as Jeremiah who challenged the temple system and the ruling priests.[137] They had stories of Robin Hood types who had plundered and then given those spoils to the aged, orphans and widows, as well as to

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[133] Grünewald, *Bandits*, 94.
[134] Grünewald, *Bandits*, 96.
[135] Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 471; cf. 479 concerning "tax fugitives."
[136] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 3.
[137] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 8.

those who had been oppressed and tortured—all the while acknowledging the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord to them in this endeavour (2 Macc 8:27–30). There may therefore have been an affinity between those who were poor and marginalized and those involved in banditry. Ramsay MacMullen suggests that this affinity would sometimes lead those who sympathized with bandit groups to eventually join them.[138] However, because of the lack of direct evidence of such a solidarity between peasants and bandit groups, caution is required in order not to commit to a one-to-one connection between the two.[139]

Another important source of hope for oppressed people was in apocalypticism. Richard Horsley and John Hanson observe the following concerning the palpable nature of this apocalyptic hope: "It was not simply an urgent search for revelation, but also a consoling and often energizing conviction that divine deliverance, even historical fulfillment, was close to hand."[140] This would have been an important motivator for those who felt the need to resist oppression.

The time of Jesus was characterized by widespread popular resistance and framed by significant uprisings, first in the time after 4 BCE (following the death of Herod) and then later from 66–73 CE as part of the great Jewish revolt against the Romans.[141] In the former incident, a large number protested and lamented to Archelaus, Herod's son and replacement, against mistreatment and severe taxes. They also began

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[138] MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 193, 196–97.

[139] Kloppenborg, for example, maintains that this supposed alignment is "poorly attested" (Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 462). However, he goes on to say the following: "It is indeed possible that some of these 'supporters' were peasants; but that conclusion is neither inevitable nor obvious" (Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 478).

[140] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 17.

[141] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 30, 35.

throwing stones at soldiers in protest when their complaints were not heard. In response to this, Archelaus had three thousand of them slaughtered during Passover sacrifices.[142] This set off a massive uprising at Pentecost several weeks later with many streaming into Jerusalem from a number of regions, including Galilee and Judea.[143]

During the administration of Pilate (c. 26–36 CE), enraged that he had brought images of Caesar into Jerusalem, numerous people demonstrated, including many who came in from the country. When threatened with weapons unless they submitted, the people threw themselves down with their necks exposed. This led to the removal of the images.[144] It was a successful instance of nonviolent protest. A similar incident later happened during the rule of Gaius Caligula (37–41 CE) in the area of Galilee (specifically the city of Tiberias). Josephus reports that several thousand people proclaimed that they would be willing to die rather than have their laws violated by having a statue of Caligula dedicated. They again exposed their throats to demonstrate this willingness. In addition, they went on strike and refused to work the land for forty days, thereby depriving the elites and Romans of their revenue. All this persuaded those in authority to rescind the decision.[145] These are of course rare instances of Roman authorities taking the action desired by the protestors, but they *are* examples of nonviolent popular resistance.[146]

Banditry, as already suggested, was a common form of popular resistance around the first century. Political and economic conditions contributed to the frequency of

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[142] Josephus, *Ant*. 17:200–218; *War*, 2:1–13; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 36, 37–38.
[143] Josephus, *War* 2:42–54; *Ant*. 17:250–64; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 36, 37–38.
[144] Josephus, *War* 2:169–74.
[145] Josephus, *Ant*. 18:263–88; Horsley, *Galilee*, 71.
[146] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 38.

bandit activity.[147] Toward the end of the first century BCE, Herod slaughtered a number of bandits hiding out in caves, those remaining choosing death over slavery by killing themselves and their family members.[148] There is also evidence of bandits, also known as brigands, in the Gospel of Mark. The fact that Jesus was crucified with two people who were identified as "bandits" (15:27) is telling.[149] He had earlier asked those who had come from the chief priests, elders, and scribes to arrest him why they were doing so "as though I were a bandit?" (Mark 14:48). Horsley and Hanson echo this question: "Why would Jesus be portrayed as arrested and crucified as if he were a bandit?"[150] What does this communicate to the Markan audience of both yesterday and today? First, this is an indicator that there was indeed bandit activity occurring at that time. Second, it conveys that the Romans intended Jesus to be perceived as being associated with some kind of disruptive activity like banditry.

Horsley and Hanson have proposed that "social banditry" is a particular type of banditry that arose as an extreme response to extreme conditions. They suggest it was a pattern of life engaged in by agrarian peasants whose circumstances are considered unbearable enough to leave their families and land. Exploitation by elite landowners as well as those in authority is the typical setting "particularly in situations where many peasants are economically vulnerable and governments are administratively inefficient."[151] The concept of social banditry describes a situation where peasants align

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[147] Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 467–68.

[148] Josephus, *War* 1:309–13; *Ant.* 14:421–30; Horsley, *Galilee*, 55–56.

[149] The NRSV translates δύο λῃστάς as "two bandits" in 15:27. Earlier versions, such as the RSV, use the word "robbers" which is less accurate. "'Brigand/bandit' is more precise and avoids the possible implication of '(common) thief' (Greek: *kleptēs*), a different phenomenon" (Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 87n9).

[150] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 48; cf. 256.

[151] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 49; cf. xxiv.

themselves with bandit groups, working in solidarity against elite rulers. As already mentioned, there is a shortage of definitive support for such a circumstance in first-century Galilee.[152] It is most probable that deteriorating economic and social circumstances contributed to increased bandit activity and there is evidence that banditry occurred in connection to political activity. However, the situation is quite complex.[153] Part of the problem is that Josephus condenses the complexity of these movements into one term.[154] Another issue adding to the complexity and vagueness in understanding banditry is that "bandit" was sometimes used as an insult, rather than with the intention of identifying someone as a member of a particular group.[155] Despite this complexity and the variety of insurgent groups, they all had political and subversive aims. According to Grünewald, this would "not square with social bandits, who give vent to their undirected protest in simple, pre-political forms."[156] I would stress that it is possible to engage with the topic of banditry in the ancient context *without* adhering to the concept of social banditry. From the little historical evidence that we have today, defining and demarcating who bandits were and what activities they pursued is a complex task. However, the main point is that those in a number of groups, including bandits, had political and rebellious motives and can therefore be understood as resisters. Some, but not all, of them were peasants.

During the time that Fadus was procurator of Judea (44–46 CE), there was a group of bandits under the leadership of Tholomy who caused "a world of mischief" to

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[152] Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 479.
[153] Kloppenborg, "Unsocial Bandits," 471, 481.
[154] Grünewald, *Bandits*, 94. Grünewald accuses Horsley of doing the same thing in his understanding of social banditry.
[155] Grünewald, *Bandits*, 95. See Josephus, *Ant*. 15:120.
[156] Grünewald, *Bandits*, 95.

the areas of Idumea and Arabia before Tholomy's arrest and execution.[157] Josephus also gives other evidence of bandits during this period which apparently began decades earlier during the time of Jesus.[158] During the tenure of Cumanus (48–52 CE), the area of Judea was "overrun" with bandits.[159] Felix (52–60 CE) crucified a large number of bandits under the leadership of one Eleazar after they had apparently done significant damage to the area over a period of a couple decades.[160]

Banditry was a transitional phase which grew in intensity but also developed into other forms of resistance such as popular messiahs and governments. Groups of bandits coming together eventually formed the group known as the Zealots, but not until the late 60s.[161] Bands of brigands also became a significant part of the actual fighting resistance in the Great Revolt of 66–73 CE.[162] The incidence of banditry escalated to epidemic proportions in the years leading up to the revolt. In response, the Romans plundered areas of Galilee, burned towns, and killed 8,400 people.[163] However, due to the combat experience of these bands of bandits, the resistance was able to temporarily drive the Roman military out of Judea in 66 CE.[164]

Jesus himself did not engage in or promote the type of violent resistance often associated with banditry. He instead offered alternative approaches to resistance. However, an awareness of bandit movements is helpful to underscore that there was a context of resistance against oppression during this time. The people of Galilee and

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[157] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:5.
[158] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:160–61. See also Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 67.
[159] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:124.
[160] Josephus, *War* 2:253.
[161] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 218. I will be discussing Zealots in more depth later in the chapter.
[162] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 83.
[163] Josephus, *War* 2:505–9; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 77–78.
[164] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 85.

Judea, as do people throughout history, clearly felt the need to resist oppressive powers. Moreover, the existence of banditry helps to illuminate the social deterioration of circumstances of those living under the Roman Empire, a reality which would have resonated with the followers of Jesus and caused his message, in word and deed, to be particularly meaningful to them.[165] Understanding all of this helps to understand the context of resistance within the Gospel of Mark.

Messianic and Prophetic Movements

Apart from Jesus, who was executed for the alleged crime of being "The King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26) in the first half of the first century CE, there were other incidents where a large group of people followed someone whom they had proclaimed as a king.[166] These messianic movements were wider in scope than the bandit movements and had a much more significant impact on society in Palestine under the domination of the Romans.[167] The Markan author may well have composed the apocalyptic discourse in Mark 13, and possibly the Gospel as a whole, in response to messianic pretenders becoming more prevalent leading up to the Jewish War.[168] The climate in which banditry thrived at certain points during this period was also a climate which led to the

[165] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 256.

[166] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 88.

[167] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 246. However, they were often associated with banditry, at least as described by Josephus. Grünewald tells of several who were called bandits by Josephus who had political aspirations to be king and should therefore rather be identified as usurpers (Grünewald, *Bandits*, 95–96; cf. Josephus, *War* 1:204; 2:56; *Ant*. 17:271–72).

[168] Yarbro Collins, "Composition and Performance," 551, 557–58. Yarbro Collins proposes that the doorkeeper mentioned in 13:34 "suggests that some followers of Jesus have the task of guarding the community against false pretentions to prophetic or messianic status by unmasking them, issuing the correct interpretation of eschatological tradition and events, and exhorting the Community" (Yarbro Collins, "Composition and Performance," 558). This may be speculative but the warning against "[f]alse messiahs and false prophets" in 13:22 is clear.

emergence of popular messianic movements. Additionally, Jewish traditions of "a popular 'anointed one'" made these conditions particularly conducive.[169] The story of King David is a good example from Israel's history of someone leading what was in essence a bandit movement who eventually became the anointed king.[170]

In addition to the Pentecost revolt in Jerusalem, which occurred after Herod's death in 4 BCE, there were also uprisings associated with the pursuit of kingship in other areas shortly after his death, namely Galilee, Perea, and other parts of Judea.[171] Judas the son of Ezekias, who had "an ambitious desire of the royal dignity," raided and plundered the palace at Sepphoris in Galilee.[172] Simon, a former slave of Herod from Perea, "was so bold as to put a diadem on his head, while a certain number of the people stood by him, and by them he was declared to be a king." He and his followers burned and plundered the palace in Jericho.[173] Athronges, who came from humble beginnings and had been a shepherd, also had royal aspirations. He and his brothers had numerous followers who called him king and, under his leadership, they killed a number of the Romans as well as of the local forces.[174]

After these incidents there is no mention of popular messianic ventures, other than any resemblances there may be between these movements and the life of Christ, until the Jewish War with Rome which took place from 66–73 CE. There may have been

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[169] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 93.

[170] In 1 Sam 22:1–2 the similarities to bandit movements are notable: hiding out in a cave and drawing around 400 fellow fugitives to himself—"everyone who was discontented" or indebted; cf. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 93.

[171] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 111–14.

[172] Josephus, *Ant*. 17:271–72.

[173] Josephus, *Ant*. 17:273–74; 17: 275–76.

[174] Josephus, *Ant*. 17:278–85.

other messianic movements during this time but, if there were, there is no record of them due to a "paucity of sources" during that time.[175]

Simon bar Giora had 40,000 followers in addition to those who were armed. These helped him plunder Idumea.[176] His movement lasted for two years, right up until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.[177] Horsley and Hanson suggest that Simon bar Giora's movement need not be seen as a disorganized and confused group of followers. His leadership produced "a trained and organized army, with forethought and preparation given to the support system necessary for a prolonged war of liberation."[178]

Another category of resistance that had significant appeal among the common people at various points throughout the first century was in the form of prophetic movements and oracular prophets. One who claimed to be a prophet was Theudas. Apparently "many were deluded by his words" which led to him being executed by Fadus, procurator of Judea from 44–46 CE.[179] According to the Pharisee Gamaliel, after his execution "all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared" (Acts 5:36). Since Fadus was in office subsequent to a time of significant instability, it is not surprising that a prophetic movement like that of Theudas would emerge.[180]

Another self-proclaimed prophet, an Egyptian, was also referred to in the book of Acts where it says that he "stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness" (21:38).[181] His objective was to overthrow the Roman garrison in

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[175] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 118.
[176] Josephus, *War* 4:529, 534.
[177] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 125.
[178] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 123.
[179] Josephus, *Ant*. 20:97–98.
[180] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 165.
[181] Josephus claims he had 30,000 followers (Josephus, *War* 2:261).

Jerusalem so that he could take control. However, the procurator Felix (52–60 CE) stopped this from happening by killing or capturing most of his followers, although the Egyptian himself managed to escape.[182] For both Theudas and the Egyptian, "the social and economic circumstances were those that might well have led to a movement seeking liberation from oppression and distress."[183] These prophetic movements were considered revolutionary and were therefore put down by Fadus and later by Felix.[184]

In addition to prophetic movements there were oracular prophets who stood in a long tradition of Jewish prophets whose goal was to present God's message to people.[185] Jesus son of Hananiah was such an oracular prophet during the time of the Jewish Revolt. His words such as the prophetic lament "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"[186] often echo the words of Jesus Christ. Another example was John the Baptist. According to Josephus, Herod "feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion" and so he had him executed.[187] Jesus' words in his encounter with the chief priests and elders in Mark 11:27–33 indicate that the prophetic words and actions (including baptism) of John the Baptist were considered subversive and in defiance to priestly authority.[188]

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[182] Josephus, *War* 2:261–63.
[183] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 168.
[184] Josephus, *War* 2:259–60; *Ant*. 20:68, 98.
[185] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 172.
[186] Josephus, *War* 6:300–309.
[187] Josephus, *Ant*. 18:118–19. Horsley and Hanson state that "he was arrested and executed as a threat to the regime" (Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 181). This is not communicated in the Markan text where Herod arrests John because he is preaching against Herod's personal moral failings (Mark 6:17–18). In addition to this there are other differences in the two texts, including names and marriage details (Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 160). Concerning the account of Josephus, Robert Gundry suggests there could be a natural progression from fearing someone for their moral teaching to believing this would cause them to be involved in the promotion of sedition. "More than one ruler has been known to fear the same development with respect to popular religious leaders" (Gundry, *Mark*, 319).
[188] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 179.

The prophetic movements and oracular prophets have an important resonance with the prophetic ministry of Jesus in that they speak out against injustice as well as proclaiming a meaningful and liberative hope for people living under the domination of empire. "Originating in apocalyptic visions, the messages delivered by these prophets held out hope for the people suffering under increasing oppression prior to the rebellion, or for those struggling against overwhelming odds once the Romans brought their massive forces to suppress the revolt."[189] Prophets were therefore key agents for communicating resistance against tyranny and oppression. Their adherents, in turn, underscore this resistance by the very act of following the prophets, making them a threat to the empire and its representatives.

With respect to these messianic and prophetic leaders, and even some of the bandit leaders, one of their objectives seems to have been to empower their followers. These movements would thus come under the integrative empowerment category and stand against oppressive power.

The Fourth Philosophy, the Sicarii, and the Zealots

Although the most prevalent occurrences of resistance in the first century were the popular resistance movements, there were also some resistance movements that were more "politically conscious" and methodical. These included the Fourth Philosophy and the Sicarii, who were both active in the fifties and sixties, although the Fourth Philosophy was active as early as 6 CE resisting the census.[190] The Fourth Philosophy

[189] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 181; cf. Josephus, *War* 6:286–87.
[190] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xvi, xxv.

was an intellectual movement headed by teachers, including Pharisees, that was particularly focused on activism. This activism was apparently nonviolent.[191] The Sicarii were especially known for assassinations, both symbolic assassinations of specific individuals in the high priestly class and more general assassinations of the powerful and elite. They would also kidnap for ransom and plunder.[192] I am including the Zealots here because they are often confused with the Sicarii movement although they were quite distinct from them in several ways.[193] They were comprised of bandit groups joining together and did not become active until the middle of the Jewish revolt, whereas the Sicarii were already functioning in the fifties.[194] The goal of the Zealots was to bring about an egalitarian society primarily in the city of Jerusalem.[195] The Zealot movement was at one time believed to have begun in Galilee, however it is now evident that all of their activity was carried out in Judea.[196] These three movements are further evidence of resistance to the empire occurring in greater Judea.

Power dynamics are central to all forms of resistance. Exploitative power does not allow for its subjects to have agency. In fact, it promotes powerlessness and a lack of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Resistance is a response to this type of oppression that seeks to address powerlessness. Those who resist are taking back their own agency and, in many cases, those who lead resistance movements are, in effect, giving back

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[191] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 191, 198. Josephus observes of them: "These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord" (Josephus, *Ant*. 18:23).

[192] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 205, 241.

[193] Smith, "Zealots and Sicarii," 19.

[194] Morton Smith reports that the Zealots did not organize as a group until this time (Smith, "Zealots and Sicarii," 19); cf. Bermejo-Rubio, "Jesus and the Anti-Roman Resistance," 7. Contra Brandon who puts the Zealots during "the critical years" of 6 to 73 CE (Brandon, "Jesus and the Zealots," 62).

[195] Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xxv–xxvi, 76.

[196] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 131n42.

autonomy to those from whom it has been stolen. Resistance therefore endeavours to overturn oppressive power structures.

Conclusion

The scope and intensity of the oppression carried out by the Roman Empire in the first century is significant. Each of Young's categories of oppression is apparent in how the empire engaged with those whom it colonized. That there would have been resistance in response to this oppression is not at all surprising. The two types of power (tyrannical/oppressive and empowering/enriching) are also evident in the first-century context. The former is, of course, primarily seen in how the Roman Empire engages with those whom it dominates.[197] The latter is seen, albeit to a limited extent, in some of the resistance movements. This context will therefore provide a contrast for how Jesus uses power and resistance in response to oppressive leaders.

Today's readers of the New Testament, including those who might read it through the lens of popular culture works like the Harry Potter novels, would augment their understanding of what they read by becoming more familiar with first-century conditions of oppression and resistance. Enhancing their understanding of first-century power dynamics would therefore enable readers to make connections between the Harry Potter literature and the Gospel of Mark. In the next two chapters, I will use such an enhanced reading to examine Mark's Gospel through the lens of Harry Potter. I will do this by first juxtaposing the Harry Potter narrative with the Gospel as a whole and

[197] As mentioned above, even those Roman rulers who were known as benefactors, were often acting in their own interests.

thereafter use the same process to investigate Mark 10:32–45 more specifically. Throughout this process, I will consider how the intertextual connections uncovered in this analysis can be used to help Harry Potter readers revise and expand their horizons.

CHAPTER 3: OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE IN HARRY POTTER AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK

An important premise of this study is that popular culture, including young adult speculative fiction, can be used as a lens to help examine biblical literature. This lens can help to provide new insights that might otherwise remain undiscovered. There are countless potential reading partners that could assist in such a task. I have chosen the Harry Potter novels as a reading lens with which to read the Gospel of Mark. In the same way that the Harry Potter literature can be used to read the Markan narrative, other popular culture works can be used to help readers explore other biblical texts.

The purpose of this chapter will be to juxtapose the Harry Potter literature with the Gospel of Mark as a whole. This process of juxtaposition, using the Harry Potter lens, will draw out intertextual connections that highlight the themes of oppression and resistance in the Gospel. Significant evidence of these themes will be uncovered to show a pattern of resistance in the Gospel. This pattern helps to depict Jesus as a strong resister of oppression, someone who would certainly resonate with the Harry Potter audience.

Oppression

Oppression is ubiquitous in the Harry Potter narrative, as in the Gospel of Mark. In both narratives, we can find examples of all of the categories of oppression outlined by

Young: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.[1] Oppression and tyranny are the fundamental problems that need to be addressed in the plots of the stories. Some of the oppression is quite blatant and straightforward while elsewhere it is more subtle and can even result from the complicity of characters who are portrayed as on the "right side." I will consider the following types of oppression that emerge in the stories: perpetrators of oppression; terrorism; violence and murder; complicity; marginalization; systemic oppression.

Opponents and Perpetrators

In both the Harry Potter corpus and the Gospel of Mark, the question of who the perpetrators of oppression are is a complex one. This complexity applies both to determining who the oppressors are and how they go about perpetrating their oppression. In both cases, it is not just one individual or group who is the perpetrator. Rather, there are multiple sources of oppression as well as different degrees and varieties of oppression. For both the Harry Potter corpus and the Gospel of Mark, however, there is one primary oppressor. In Harry Potter it is an individual—Voldemort. In Mark it is Rome. These two are the principal opponents with respect to the main characters, Harry Potter and Jesus respectively. They each embody the values of empire—Voldemort figuratively and Rome, of course, is a metonym for the Roman Empire. Other groups and individuals may not work directly with the empire but may contribute to oppression and suffering through complicity and expediency. Although

[1] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 93–102.

there may not necessarily be an intention to oppress in these latter situations, it is oppression if it is experienced as oppression by others.

It is necessary to consider who the opponents and perpetrators of oppression are since I will be addressing the subject of the "rulers" and "tyrants" in Mark 10:42. It is *these* perpetrators that are of particular interest for this study, as well as those at risk of becoming like them. I will examine the oppressors in the Harry Potter series in order to highlight some of the issues surrounding the perpetrators in Mark's Gospel. Further complexity results from the fact that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between Harry Potter characters and the perpetrators in Mark. Sometimes the correspondence is situational rather than between certain characters.

Voldemort is the main enemy of Harry and many others in the wizarding world throughout the seven books. He has several motivators that especially exemplify his cruel and tyrannical nature. First, he is determined to be immortal and has no scruples about murdering numerous people in order to achieve this.[2] He prioritizes pureblood racial supremacy.[3] He also grasps after ultimate power and desires to dominate others.[4] He also has a terrorist group of followers called the Death Eaters. There are numerous Death Eaters, but some of the most prominent in the books are Bellatrix Lestrange and the Malfoy family. Professor Dolores Umbridge is nowhere identified as a Death Eater but is quite similar to Voldemort in the things she values, such as racial purity, and in the abusive way she treats others.[5] Commenting on this, the ambiguity is expressed well by Harry's godfather Sirius Black who observes that "the world isn't split into good

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[2] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 469.
[3] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 11–12, 440.
[4] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 211; *Half-Blood Prince*, 63.
[5] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 249.

people and Death Eaters."[6] There is further haziness in trying to classify the Dementors. They are used as prison guards at the wizard prison Azkaban until the return of Voldemort, after which he commandeers them for his own purposes. However, Dementors are also phantom creatures who feed off the happiness of their victims, giving them a demonic quality.[7] The Dursleys are another source of oppression, particularly for Harry.[8] They have no association with Voldemort but their bullying and attempts to control and suppress Harry cause him significant suffering. Here, as with other characters in the book, nuancing is helpful, since there is growth and movement away from oppressive conduct in the case of Dudley Dursley.[9]

Authoritarian leadership is an issue of particular concern within the Harry Potter narrative and will also be pertinent to the discussion of perpetrators in the Gospel of Mark. When taken to its extreme, it becomes totalitarianism where there is the intention to control every aspect of a person's life. One element of this is thought control and, once again, Dolores Umbridge is the quintessential example of a character in the Harry Potter literature who does this. In her case, it takes the form of suppression of critical thinking. She does not allow students to communicate their opinions and actually prefers that they stay ignorant on certain subjects—an unhealthy pedagogical practice which contributes to "the antithesis of knowledge."[10] Her attempts to have complete control over the words, actions, and thoughts of her students, although ultimately unsuccessful,

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[6] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 271.

[7] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 67, 140–41. The Dementors role in policing and imprisonment, as well as their oppressive behaviour, makes them relevant for discussions of police brutality that are happening nowadays. An example would be the police involvement in the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020.

[8] They are his aunt, uncle, and cousin.

[9] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 40.

[10] Tiffin, "Learning," 4. See also Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 284.

are comparable to the approach of totalitarian systems. Indeed, she is working in service to a system that is becoming more and more authoritarian under the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge.[11] Another example of systemic corruption in the books is Ludo Bagman who uses his position to exploit others for his own gain.[12]

Interestingly, it is the ambiguity involved in categorizing certain groups in the Gospel of Mark as opponents or oppressors that is one of the most significant parallels with the Harry Potter novels. It is often challenging determining who the actual "enemy" is.[13] It is worth mentioning at this point that, as with the Harry Potter story and human beings in general, it is those who have or, more specifically, those who *misuse* power who are the ones who oppress others. Thus, it is the *rulers* of the Gentiles who are being criticized in 10:42, not the Gentiles themselves. The Gentiles are oppressed by their tyrannical rulers. In the same way, it is not the Jews who are the opponents of Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel but, rather, the Jewish *authorities* who misuse their power. I also submit that this discussion about the opponents and perpetrators in Mark will deal specifically with how these groups were characterized by the Markan evangelist. It is not necessarily a statement about what was happening historically.[14]

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[11] Bealer, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix," 177.

[12] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 307, 315, 388–89, 633–35. Bagman is the head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports and uses his position as organizer and judge of the Triwizard Tournament to try to influence the results.

[13] One group that I will not be addressing in this discussion of Markan perpetrators is the Sadducees. In the only episode where they are mentioned in the Gospel (12:18–27), there is no evidence that they are involved in any kind of oppression. They are merely asking a question, although they may be "quite wrong" (12:27).

[14] For example, I am not making a statement about what the group identified as the Pharisees was like. Anthony Saldarini points out that Mark's portrayal of the Pharisees is quite different from what Josephus reports (Saldarini, "Pharisees," 145). I mention this with my earlier caveats about Josephus' well-known tendency towards bias.

For the purposes of this study, I suggest that the Roman Empire is the primary perpetrator of oppression in the Gospel of Mark.[15] Jesus himself has some things to say about this. In Mark 10:42, he warns his followers specifically of the "rulers" of the "Gentiles"—those who are "tyrants." Earlier, in his third passion prediction, he had declared that the Gentiles would "mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him" (10:34). This statement connects the oppressors he is describing in 10:42 with the Roman Empire. Not only that, it serves to identify Rome not only as a general oppressor and tyrant but also as *his* oppressor and executor.

In the previous chapter, I explored some of the features of the Roman Empire and its system of Pax Romana. I found it to be characterized by power grabbing, violence, and subjugation. This description of a totalitarian system fits with the tyranny and lording it over others described by Jesus in Mark 10:42.[16] The parallel of all of this to how Voldemort is portrayed in the Harry Potter books is noteworthy.

The Gentiles are not the only ones mentioned in the third passion prediction. Jesus also refers to the scribes and chief priests, who are the ones who condemn him and hand him over for torture and execution (10:33).[17] According to Saldarini, the fact that it is the chief priests that hand Jesus over to Pilate is evidence of their dominance in Jerusalem, particularly in terms of interacting with Rome and its representatives.[18] It is also telling that much of Jesus' resistance to systemic powers is in Jerusalem. The chief

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[15] Justin Comber has proposed that, in the Gospel of Mark, Rome is in service to the Kingdom of Satan who is the enemy of Jesus (Comber, "Torn Between Two Kingdoms," 62, 97). This may well be the case, although it is not the focus of my study.

[16] He is making the point that, in some important way, this type of rule is different from appropriate leadership.

[17] In the first passion prediction, he mentions the chief priests and scribes but also the elders (8:31).

[18] Saldarini, "Pharisees," 154.

priests are exclusively mentioned in connection to Jerusalem and predominantly in connection with his arrest, trial, and condemning him to death.[19] This is evidence that the chief priests abused their power to oppress people. The chief priests, scribes, and sometimes the elders are shown to be part of a totalitarian system like Dolores Umbridge and Cornelius Fudge. This is seen in how they react to Jesus words in incidents like the temple demonstration (11:18) and the vineyard parable he tells (12:12).

In addition to being mentioned in over half the references to the chief priests, the scribes are mentioned a number of other times in the Gospel.[20] Some of these are in association with the Pharisees. Of particular note is Mark 12:38–40, where Jesus calls them out for their conduct, including their exploitation of widows. In doing this, he identifies them as oppressors. They, like Ludo Bagman, exploit those in vulnerable positions for their own purposes.

Significantly, the Pharisees are not mentioned in any of the passion predictions in connection with Jesus' suffering and death, although there is mention earlier in the Gospel that they were conspiring about "how to destroy him" with the Herodians (3:6). The role of the Pharisees in Galilee as presented by the Markan composer is not completely clear. It has been suggested they were retainers. Retainers were in the service of the elite and acted as mediators of administrative and religious objectives to those in outlying village areas.[21] Horsley considers the Pharisees retainers and suggests they intermediated on behalf of the "high-priestly regime." To what extent this is the

[19] The first mention of them is in 8:31, when Jesus is already on his way to Jerusalem. Other references in Mark's Gospel are: 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:1, 10, 43, 53, 55; 15:1, 3, 10–11, 31.

[20] Mark 1:22; 2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1, 5; 9:11, 14; 12:28, 35, 38–40.

[21] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 148; cf. 147–49.

case is not certain.[22] In any case, it is crucial to recognize at this point that the scribes and Pharisees mentioned in Mark's Gospel "came down from Jerusalem" (Mark 3:22; cf. 7:1–3)—that is, they were not actually part of the local Galilean communities and were coming from Judea.[23] The Pharisees were neither "hostile [n]or well disposed to Rome."[24] They were not directly a part of the imperial system of oppression. However, their attitudes and actions were sometimes complicit with the Roman way of doing things which would have had the effect of being oppressive. Later in this chapter, I will address the question of complicity in both the Harry Potter corpus as well as the Gospel of Mark more fully, including how it applies to the Pharisees.

Two characters in the Gospel of Mark who are undoubtedly retainers are Herod (Antipas) and Pilate. Jesus himself does not say anything specific about Herod and Pilate although his words in Mark 10:33 and 10:42 may well include them as representatives of Rome. The one who does speak about both Herod and Pilate is the Markan evangelist. We know from his narrative that Herod has John the Baptist beheaded (6:27–28) and Pilate has Jesus tortured and executed (15:15, 19–20, 24).

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[22] Horsley, *Galilee*, 149. He says that they are the "representatives" of the priests (Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 73; *Hearing the Whole Story*, 74, 151). E. P. Sanders sees the Pharisees as concerned with "protecting the priesthood and the temple from impurity" (Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 324). There is evidence in the Gospel of Mark itself that the priests "sent" the Pharisees to Jesus (12:13); cf. Gundry who refers back to 11:27—along with 12:1, 12—to show that it was the chief priests, scribes, and elders who sent the Pharisees in this instance (Gundry, *Mark*, 692). However, this does not necessarily indicate that there was an ongoing collaboration between the priests and the Pharisees. It may only have been the one occurrence of them coming together. The Pharisees were also known to resist against authority. For example, they had resisted the Hasmonean ruler Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), who was also high priest, for improprieties in his priestly role as well as oppression of the people (Josephus, *Ant*. 13:372–83; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 29). According to Josephus, the Pharisees were known for "greatly opposing kings" (Josephus, *Ant*. 17:41; cf. Mason, "Pharisaic Dominance," 369–70).

[23] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 47.

[24] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 58.

These two are directly connected with the Roman Empire and carry out the empire's purposes. In this respect, they are like the Death Eaters who act on behalf of Voldemort.

One last group of oppressors in the Gospel comprises demons or unclean spirits. They themselves persecute people in very tangible ways. They are symbolic of Rome and represent the empire, similar to how dementors represent certain authorities (the Ministry of Magic, and later Voldemort) in the Harry Potter books.[25] The connection between Dementors and demons will come into play in the discussion of terrorism, which I will next address.

Terrorism

In addition to being motivators for oppression, fear and terror can be forms of oppression in themselves. Tom Riddle, the younger Voldemort, terrorizes two children because it gives him pleasure.[26] Draco Malfoy attempts to threaten and intimidate Borgin with what later turns out to be the Dark Mark, the sign of the Death Eaters.[27] Other than Voldemort, the quintessential purveyors of terrorism in the books are the Dementors. Since they are prison guards, this would be a form of systemic terrorism.[28] The Dementors embody fear and despair and they disempower people.[29] The Ministry uses the "despair" and "hopelessness" emanating from the Dementors as tools of their

[25] See the discussion of *Legion* in the "Hidden in Plain Sight" subsection under "Resistance" below.

[26] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 520.

[27] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 121.

[28] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 67.

[29] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 117, 140–41.

institutionalized oppression.[30] The evil necessary to create Horcruxes also adds to despair.[31]

Crucifixion is one of the primary ways that we see the Roman Empire use institutional terrorism in the Gospel of Mark. It was intended to intimidate and terrorize colonized, subjugated peoples in order to keep them in line.[32] This use of terrorism as part of systemic oppression is comparable to how Dementors are used. Additionally, terror is produced by demons in Mark, which are also akin to Dementors in a number of ways. Demons, sometimes referred to as "unclean spirits" in the Gospel, are seen to oppress, torment, and terrorize various people (5:1–20; 7:25–30; 9:17–27). Although this is not explicitly oppression carried out by the Roman Empire, there seems to be a strong association with Rome and its terrorizing ways in the incident with the Gerasene man, as indicated by the name "Legion" for a host of demons (5:9). In any case, Jesus resists the terror of the demons, rebuking them (9:25) and sending them away (5:8–13). He also sends out the twelve, giving them authority to also exorcise demons (6:7–13). This is similar to how Harry teaches the members of Dumbledore's Army (DA) how to cast a patronus so they can protect themselves from the terrorizing effects of the Dementors.

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[30] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 257, 259.

[31] For example, Harry is unable to summon a Patronus against dementors when wearing the locket Horcrux (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 285). Horcruxes are objects that Voldemort uses to split his soul into pieces in order to become immortal.

[32] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 15, 27.

Violence and Murder

Physical abuse and torture are recurrent methods of oppression in the Harry Potter literature. Voldemort and his cohort use violent methods a great deal. For example, he tortures the wandmakers Ollivander and Gregorovitch.[33] Bellatrix Lestrange tortures the Longbottoms and Hermione, as well as young children, the most vulnerable.[34] Voldemort frequently tortures his own followers and on one occasion demands that Peter Pettigrew give up an arm for him.[35] At certain points during the seven-year story, students at Hogwarts are subjected to violence by teachers, staff, and other students. Professor Dolores Umbridge physically abuses students by having them use quills that draw blood and also threatens to use the Cruciatus (torture) curse on students.[36] The Carrows, two of Voldemort's Death Eaters installed by him at the school, violently punish students as well as making them use the Cruciatus curse against each other.[37] Filch, the caretaker, is thrilled when he is given the go-ahead to punish students by whipping them.[38] The cruelty underlying the implementation of such violent abuse in all of these instances, often with an indifferent attitude in terms of how it impacts those who are targeted, is troubling.

Killing is a ubiquitous theme in the Harry Potter literature. Most of it is carried out or decreed by Voldemort who is obsessed with killing for his own purposes. He steals the very lifeblood of a vulnerable unicorn in order to get what he wants.[39] He uses

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[33] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 84–85; 279.
[34] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 454–55, 691; *Deathly Hallows*, 463–67.
[35] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 500–501, 556, 562–63.
[36] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 240–41, 243–44, 247–48, 658.
[37] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 574.
[38] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 593.
[39] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 187–89.

the *Avada Kedavra* spell over and over in the books without hesitation or scruple. It is his signature spell in the same way *Expelliarmus* comes to be Harry's signature spell.[40] He considers people disposable and murders them if they get in his way or have served their purpose for him.[41] He kills his own father and grandparents and his actions implicate his uncle in their murder.[42] He shows no concern about his followers dying, only whether they have done what he wanted them to do.[43] Sometimes he is the one who kills them.[44] Those who follow in his footsteps also commit vicious murders without any apparent regret.[45] He uses or attempts to use *Avada Kedavra* on Harry six times,[46] as well as trying to kill him in other ways.[47]

In addition to killing people because they are his enemies or because they get in his way, Voldemort kills to gain ultimate power. He murders "enough people to make an army" of Inferi—corpses whom he bewitches to do as he commands.[48] He also kills so that he can create Horcruxes with the objective that this will make it impossible for others to kill him.[49] Voldemort's yearning for power is linked to his desire for a pure, homogenous society that he can control. He and his Death Eaters therefore murder many Muggles because they do not fit with this ideal of magical purity.[50] "In Voldemort's quest for complete domination, he is willing to eliminate large numbers of detractors

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[40] *Avada Kedavra* is the illegal killing curse. *Expelliarmus* is the disarming spell.
[41] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 19, 553, 569; *Deathly Hallows*, 12, 344.
[42] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 342–43.
[43] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 216; *Half-Blood Prince*, 39.
[44] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 549, 656.
[45] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 599; *Deathly Hallows*, 630.
[46] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 575; *Order of the Phoenix*, 717; *Deathly Hallows*, 345, 704, 743. This includes the first time Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby, which resulted in his lightning shaped scar (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 45).
[47] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 214; *Chamber of Secrets*, 234.
[48] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 63.
[49] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 469.
[50] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 339–40.

and dissenters, a quality . . . that often reminds us of other ritual 'cleansings' that have been used to 'justify' genocide throughout history."[51] On the whole, Voldemort's thirst for complete power and immortality—along with his utter lack of compassion—means that killing is a fundamental way that he oppresses and suppresses others.

The Roman Empire and the other authorities in Mark's Gospel, like Voldemort, use violence and murder in order to gain ultimate power and to subjugate and control others. A number of the vineyard owner's slaves as well as his son are beaten and killed in the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1–8).[52] John the Baptist is executed by Herod (6:16, 27). Jesus tells his followers that they would face physical punishment and oppression by "councils," "synagogues," and "governors and kings" (13:9). Other than these examples, most of the violence and killing in the Gospel of Mark is associated with the trial and execution of Jesus. The scribes and chief priests were already trying to discover a way to have Jesus killed during his ministry in Jerusalem (11:18). Jesus is beaten multiple times: first at the hands of the priestly council (14:15) and then by the Romans (15: 15, 19–20). The climax of all this torture is a cruel and violent death by crucifixion (15:15, 20, 24). All of this was foreshadowed by the passion predictions of Jesus which demonstrate that he knew he was going to be tortured (10:34) and killed (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Since Jesus' crucifixion was an execution done as part of "normal" legal practice at the time, it may not seem applicable to identify it as murder. However, it was done to someone whom the Roman governor Pilate was well aware was innocent

[51] Reschan "Bridge to Dystopia," 132.

[52] Since the ones doing the killing in this parable are the tenants of the vineyard owner, and therefore have less power, this comparison in terms of violence used to subjugate only works if the tenants are seen to represent those with authority. This seems, in fact, to be the case since the chief priests, elders, and scribes interpret the parable as being "against them" (Mark 12:12; cf. 11:27).

(15:10, 14) and was therefore a form of systemic murder. Thus, violence and murder, in both Harry Potter and Mark's Gospel, are used to oppress in a vicious manner and to gain and maintain power over enemies or subjugated people.

Complicity

At this point it will be useful to address the issue of complicity. This is because some of the following categories of oppression are areas where it is not only the traditional oppressors who are the perpetrators in the Harry Potter books but also those who are considered to be proponents of social justice. Sometimes this complicity of the characters is fairly subtle but at other times it is quite blatant. Young observes that oppression is often considered something done "by the Others." She notes that it "also refers to systemic and structural phenomena that are not necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant."[53] Complicity often describes situations where people are not living up to their own ideals for just and ethical behaviour. Shira Wolosky, examining gender hierarchy in the Harry Potter series, points out that the books reflect not "what *should be* but rather what *is*" going on in the world we live in.[54] We see a complex, messy, and often inadequate approach to justice. Social justice is frequently a painfully slow process and those who advocate for social justice in one area can often be complicit in injustice in another.[55]

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[53] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 92.

[54] Wolosky, "Gendered Heroism," 121. Emphasis added.

[55] In addition to being true in the Harry Potter world and the world that the Bible describes, this is also the case in today's society and the church. The church has in some cases taken centuries, even millennia, to begin to address injustices towards certain groups, including: slaves, women, immigrants, Jews, indigenous people, and LGBTQ people.

Severus Snape is one of the characters whose decisions involve "blurring of the borders."[56] He often bullies his students and his pedagogical methods are "the absolute antithesis of what is currently accepted as good teaching practice,"[57] Although he is to a certain extent vindicated at the end of the series, he is quite tyrannical in his pedagogical approach. Harry comes to see him as "the bravest man I ever knew" but he would likely not choose to emulate his approach.[58] It certainly does not fit with the approach of someone who lays aside the Elder Wand. Another case of complicity in the books that is less blatant is when Ron and Hagrid discuss the term *Mudblood*.[59] Although they generally abhor the use of the term, they both seem to believe that it is *most* objectionable when used against someone who is competent at magic. This exposes a politics of respectability where *Mudblood* is considered unacceptable because some wizards are good and do not deserve it, rather than the assertion that it is not an appropriate term because it is cruel and discriminatory and should not be used for anyone, whether or not they are skilled at magic.[60] These, and other instances I will examine, indicate that there is a danger that even those who are deemed to be on "the right side" of the work of social justice can be complicit in injustice.

The Pharisees, as portrayed in the Gospel of Mark, are similar in some ways to Severus Snape and his complicit actions. The Pharisees are shown to be concerned with some things that are good, like the law. However, how they interpret the law is

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[56] Schuck, "Anti-racist-white-hero Premise," 21. One example is when he cruelly refers to Neville Longbottom as "Idiot Boy" (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 103).

[57] Tiffin, "Learning," 3.

[58] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 758.

[59] "Mudblood" is a slur in the wizarding world, referring to those whose ancestry is not purely from magical families; they are either Muggle-born or half-blood.

[60] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 89.

sometimes questioned by Jesus (7:1–13). They, like Snape, make purity too much of a priority. Jesus warns his disciples of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod (Mark 8:14–21). The implication is that they are to resist how Herod and the Pharisees do things—their attitudes and actions. In other words, they are not to buy into the approach of the Pharisees and Herodians. Two things seem to be happening here in terms of the complicity of the Pharisees. First, by associating them with Herod in 8:15, Jesus is warning his disciples to not become complicit with the totalitarian rulers as the Pharisees have, on occasion, done.[61] Second, both the Pharisees and Herod are characterized in Mark by their "refusal to recognize and accept the truth." Hooker submits that this is the yeast that Jesus is speaking of here.[62] This would certainly fit with the warning given to the disciples since their failure to acknowledge the truths Jesus is teaching is one of the main themes of the Gospel. Moreover, the disciples' refusal to recognize the veracity of Jesus' teachings is closely connected with their attitudes toward power and privilege. This is something I will delve into further in the following chapter. Here, again, there is a resemblance to Snape, who misuses the power he has as a teacher. The same kind of dynamics can be seen in the character development of the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, who shows an obvious reluctance to acknowledge the truth even when it is right in front of him, as well as a

[61] See also Mark 3:6; 12:13.

[62] Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 195. Cranfield suggests that the yeast Jesus is referring to is "the hypocrisy of the Pharisees which spreads its influence by means of their teaching" (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 260). Mark does not mention hypocrisy in this passage although he does, in reference to the Pharisees and Herodians, in 12:15. It seems the context here is not emphasizing hypocrisy, however. It follows immediately after 8:11–12 where the Pharisees are demanding a sign. This, and the fact that the disciples have an issue with not comprehending things makes Hooker's explanation more plausible in this instance.

thirst for power which contributes to his undoing.[63] This is the kind of thing that Jesus, here and later in the Gospel, warns the disciples against. Consequently, although they may have good values and intentions, both the Pharisees and the disciples are at risk of becoming complicit with those they in other ways resist. This will have relevance for engaging with Mark 10:42–43, where Jesus warns the twelve not to be like the imperial rulers who misuse power.

Marginalization

There are several groups who are marginalized in the Harry Potter novels including house-elves, giants, Muggles, and Muggle-born witches and wizards. One powerful means of achieving marginalization is through erasure. Erasure, as Young observes, comes about when one group considers itself the standard or norm and those deemed Others are regarded as inferior and thus made invisible. It is a form of cultural imperialism.[64] Harry faces erasure by the Dursleys throughout his childhood. For instance, they only have pictures of their son Dudley on display in their living room; there are none of Harry.[65] The Dursleys also banish Harry to his room because they do not want him to be seen by their guests. Three times, at his uncle's insistence, Harry assures them that he will be "pretending [he's] not there" as if he does not even exist.[66] Others face erasure in the narrative. The complete erasure of house-elves in *Hogwarts, A*

[63] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 613–16; *Order of Phoenix*, 89, 276, 720–22. Kate Behr observes that these character flaws gradually come out over the course of the Harry Potter series: "Harry perceives elements of Fudge's personality, apparent but understated in the early books, become stronger and dominate him. Power and status have eroded the kindly Fudge, leaving naked ambition and fear behind to control his reactions to a crisis" (Behr, "Philosopher's Stone," 262–63).

[64] Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 100.

[65] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 19.

[66] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 11.

History even causes Hermione to become skeptical of one of her beloved textbooks.[67] Erasure thus marginalizes people by making them invisible. They are at the margins rather than the centre of life or society.

Some of the marginalization in the books is as result of how they are portrayed. It is clear that one of Rowling's primary objectives is to advocate for those who have been disenfranchised or subjugated. There are numerous instances of this in the books. One strategy she uses is to create empathy for those who have experienced marginalization. A good example of this is Harry himself who is shown to be an outcast at school, without any friends, in the first book.[68] Rowling also shows support for the disenfranchised by the reactions her characters have to injustice and marginalization. When Draco warns Harry to not "go making friends with the wrong sort," Harry responds by scorning Draco's exclusivity and thus defending the Weasleys whom Draco was insulting.[69] However, while at the same time calling for justice for certain groups, at other times Rowling portrays quite stereotyped and essentialist views of certain groups, which serve to marginalize them. Often this is with the same groups she or her characters seem to advocate for elsewhere. Elaine Ostry suggests that the author's goal of "antiracism [is] foiled both by a reliance on 'color blindness' and stock types" to the point where some of the justice work in the books is undone.[70] This seems to go beyond an author representing the kinds of things that are actually happening in society since some of her stereotypes are harmful and unnecessary.

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[67] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 209–10. See also Rubinstein, "Hermione Raised Her Hand," 315.
[68] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 27.
[69] Rowling, Philosopher's Stone, 81. See also Hall, "Marx, Magic," 273.
[70] Ostry, "Accepting Mudbloods," 90.

A notable example of this is in how giants are portrayed in the novels. On the one hand, Rowling depicts giants as the undeserved targets of oppression and marginalization. Hagrid, a half-giant, is a sympathetic character whereas Dolores Umbridge, one of his oppressors, is shown in a negative light. Her negative stereotypes of giants and her hatred of "part-humans" determine the actions she takes against them, such as trying to get Hagrid removed from Hogwarts.[71] However, the depiction of giants in the books becomes more complicated when we see that characters we consider to be on the "right side" of things also have negative, marginalizing stereotypes about giants. This includes Ron and even Hagrid himself.[72] This could well be deemed as an honest and perhaps intentional presentation of how people are not always perfect or consistent. However, Rowling takes the negative portrayal of giants much further. How she depicts the giant Grawp is actually quite appalling, especially for someone who is supposedly trying to be inclusive of giants and previously had her characters advocate for Hagrid's half-giant status to not be held against him. Grawp is depicted as much less than human—of minimal intelligence and violent, with a disagreeable physical appearance.[73] This is a problematic, imperialistic presentation—a deeply othering picture of giants.[74] Rowling is therefore complicit in the very marginalization her characters, in other places, attempt to dismantle.

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[71] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 638. She also has a contemptuous view of centaurs, whom she considers animals with a level of intelligence below humans, as well as legislating against werewolves because she fears them. (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 271, 665). See also Harmon for an exploration of how centaurs are marginalized and othered in the books, both socially and spatially (Harmon, "Forbidden Forests," 33–34).

[72] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 374; *Order of the Phoenix*, 380.

[73] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 667–69. The portrayal of lower intelligence as a characteristic that is somehow "less than" is, in itself, deeply problematic and ableist.

[74] Anatol, "The Replication," 114–18.

Elves, who are generally identified as "house-elves" because of their role as slaves to wizard families, are treated badly and marginalized throughout the books. Voldemort treats house-elves "like vermin."[75] He uses the house-elf Kreacher to test the dangerous booby-traps he had put in place to protect the locket Horcrux.[76] He disdains the elves and does not consider them worthy of his notice.[77] Yet Voldemort is not the only one responsible for marginalizing elves. Sirius Black has a disparaging opinion of his house-elf, nothing more than a servant.[78] Hagrid has essentialist views of the elves and believes it is "their nature" and, moreover, their desire to serve humans.[79] Hermione counts Ron among the people "who prop up rotten and unjust systems" because of how he stereotypes the elves.[80] The elves are portrayed in a demeaning way.[81] Kreacher becomes excessively compliant to Harry only because Harry is now nice to him.[82] For the most part, with the exception of Dobby, the house-elves in the books do not resist their enslavement nor hope for manumission.

Another group who is the focus of a great deal of oppression in the Harry Potter narrative is those who are not considered pure-blood. This includes those who are Muggles (non-magical humans) and Muggle-born witches and wizards. There is a hierarchy with those of pure-blood lineage at the top.[83] Pure bloodlines are linked to power.[84] Those in positions of power and privilege because of their pure-blood status are

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[75] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 133–34.
[76] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 194.
[77] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 198.
[78] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 735.
[79] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 233. "Clearly, all except Hermione are comfortable with the 'natural' slavery of the house-elves" (Gupta, *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, 117).
[80] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 113.
[81] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 466–68.
[82] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 225.
[83] Reschan, "Bridge to Dystopia," 131.
[84] Clifton, "Work in a Magical World," 69.

fearful of Muggles or Muggle-born witches and wizards gaining control; their way of life is threatened because of the existence of Muggles.[85] Looking at how Muggles and Muggle-born wizards and witches are perceived, the main characteristic ascribed to them is impurity. Their blood is considered tainted and there is a risk that they will therefore contaminate pure Magical blood-lines.[86] There are other features associated with them as well. On the statue at the Ministry of Magic, Muggles are pictured as less then, as below those of pure-blood wizard status.[87] Voldemort considers them to be "thieves of . . . knowledge and magic."[88] Voldemort's followers depict Muggles as being like animals, with low intelligence and vicious natures.[89] Because of how they are perceived, Muggles are treated badly. At the Quidditch World Cup, Muggles are humiliated and tortured.[90] The Ministry's obsession with blood purity leads to them establishing a "MUGGLE-BORN REGISTRATION COMMISSION" to enforce their policies and monitor those they are targeting.[91] Perception and treatment come together to cause the marginalization of Muggles and Muggle-born individuals by those who consider themselves pure of blood.

By marginalizing other beings and races such as elves, giants, centaurs, and those of Muggle birth, those who consider themselves pure-blood witches and wizards attempt to put themselves at the top of their defined hierarchy with others under their feet. They have chosen to be tyrants who "lord it over" (Mark 10:42) others for their

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[85] Oakes, "Secret Domination," 144.
[86] Gupta, *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, 100–101.
[87] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 242.
[88] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 12.
[89] Reschan, "Bridge to Dystopia," 131.
[90] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 108.
[91] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 250.

own selfish ideals of purity and control. Their values have led to the oppression of others.

As in the Harry Potter story, there are numerous groups who are marginalized in the Gospel of Mark. These include: tax collectors and those identified as "sinners" (2:15–17); people who are sick (1:34, 40–45; 2:3–12, 3:10; 5:22–43; 6:13, 55–56); children (9:36–37; 10:13–16; 13:17); those possessed and oppressed by demons (1:23–27, 32–34, 39; 3:15; 5:1–20; 7:25–30; 9:17–29, 38). Women in the first century often underwent significant marginalization and oppression and that is reflected in Mark. Jesus has an encounter with a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (Mark 5:24–34). She has "endured much under many physicians" to the point where she has lost everything (5:26). This contributes to a great deal of suffering in her life. She experiences economic exploitation but also marginalization and powerlessness—her autonomy and agency are taken away from her, especially because she is a woman, but she takes them back in order to be healed. Widows were particularly exposed to exploitation and marginalization (12:40–44). With each of these groups, Jesus' response is similar to Harry's usual response—to welcome them and advocate for their inclusion,

Some of the same issues and concerns arise with the marginalized in Mark's Gospel as in the Harry Potter books. Purity was highly valued and those considered impure were ostracized. This was the case with the woman who was hemorrhaging as well as the man with leprosy who came to Jesus to be healed (1:1–40). The "tax collectors and sinners" in 2:15–17 are people with whom "the scribes of the Pharisees"

will not associate or share a meal because of their emphasis on purity boundaries.[92] All of this makes Jesus' response to heal, include, and socialize with these groups all the more significant. As in the Potter world, purity in Mark is related to power dynamics; those with power are the ones who exclude those whom they consider impure.

There is also an example of marginalization and erasure carried out by the Markan author, although it needs to be qualified. There are certain women who were active in supporting Jesus' ministry in Galilee and who traveled with him to Jerusalem and yet they are left out of these stages of the story. Curiously, Mark reinserts them later in the narrative and points out that they had been there earlier (15:40–41).[93] Monika Fander, while acknowledging a "basically positive perspective," sees the Gospel's depiction of women and their invisibility for a good part of the narrative as "androcentric."[94] Granted, Mark was written in an androcentric and patriarchal context and this would certainly have influenced the evangelist's writing. Men are, indeed, the focus of much of the Gospel.[95] However, the delay in introducing these women acts to emphasize their presence and to effectively contrast their discipleship with that of the male disciples. Schüssler Fiorenza points out that "the women disciples who have followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem *suddenly* emerge as true disciples in the passion narrative."[96] It is the suddenness that makes Mark's portrayal of the women's presence more striking. Joan Mitchell proposes that "[t]o counter androcentric language

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[92] Dowd points out that the phrase "tax collectors and sinners," as well as the purity question associated with it, "is beaten into the hearer's mind by repetition (Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 215–16).

[93] "Mark has delayed mention of [these] women" (Bock, *Mark*, 374).

[94] Fander, "Gospel of Mark," 642.

[95] Jesus' interactions with the bleeding woman (5:25–34) and the Syrophoenician woman (7:24–30) are notable exceptions.

[96] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xiv; cf. 320. Emphasis added.

we can use a conscious feminist interpretative principle that reads the Gospel narratives as inclusive of women until proven otherwise and that recognizes that generic male conventions of discourse do not mention women except when they become in some way problematic or exceptional." She suggests that Mark 15:40–41 is a confirmation that this anticipatory inclusion of women was appropriate and that the passage serves to "retroject their presence" into the story up to this point.[97] Therefore, while it is true that the women are made invisible for part of the story—reflecting what was going on in the world at the time and, indeed, throughout history—their reappearance at a critical point actually helps to highlight that they were there all along. In a sense, the earlier marginalization paradoxically works to include them as Jesus' faithful followers.[98]

Noticing the erasure of certain groups in the Harry Potter books can generate curiosity in readers to look for those who are invisible in the Markan narrative. For *all* those in Mark's Gospel who are pushed to the margins and excluded, it is a kind of erasure for them. Their presence is not welcomed; they are expected to remain at a distance. They are looked down on and often considered outcasts. Like in the Harry Potter narrative, marginalization is not only oppression in itself but it also leads to even greater oppression.

Systemic Oppression

Benjamin Barton, in an article in the *Michigan Law Review*, asked the following:

> What would you think of a government that engaged in this list of tyrannical activities: tortured children for lying; designed its prison

[97] Mitchell, *Beyond Fear and Silence*, 29–30.

[98] This is not to suggest that marginalization of vulnerable groups is ever warranted, but rather that the author of Mark uses the earlier invisibility of the women in the story redemptively to emphasize their inclusion.

> specifically to suck all life and hope out of the inmates; placed citizens in that prison without a hearing; ordered the death penalty without a trial; allowed the powerful, rich, or famous to control policy; selectively prosecuted crimes (the powerful go unpunished and the unpopular face trumped-up charges); conducted criminal trials without defense counsel; used truth serum to force confessions; maintained constant surveillance over all citizens; offered no elections and no democratic lawmaking process; and controlled the press?[99]

This description is, of course, in reference to the wizarding world and its government, the Ministry of Magic, which is the setting of the Harry Potter literature. At first glance, this may seem quite unlike most Western, democratic systems of government in our time. It has been described as an abusive "Orwellian regime," with no commitment to any kind of rule of law.[100] However, Barton argues that the corrupt and abhorrent nature of the wizarding system of government still "bears . . . a tremendous resemblance to current Anglo-American government" and that the reader is therefore able to see elements of their own societal context within the pages of the books.[101] In other words, while the depiction of corruption and institutionalized oppression may be caricatured and extreme in the books, it is undeniable that corruption and systemic oppression occur in our society as well. Indeed, sometimes their occurrence is not that different.

One example of corruption is the "biased jury" that Harry faces in his trial in *Order of the Phoenix*.[102] This jury, under constant and blatant pressure from Cornelius Fudge who is heading it, changes the time and place of Harry's trial and does not inform some of the participants of this, does not give Harry an opportunity to fully answer questions, tries to rush through the trial, and undermines the witnesses.[103] All this, as

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[99] Barton, "Harry Potter and the Half-Crazed Bureaucracy," 1523–24.
[100] Granger, *Looking for God*, 59. See also Liedl, "Magic is Might," 169.
[101] Barton, "Harry Potter and the Half-Crazed Bureaucracy," 1525; cf. 1537.
[102] Reschan, "Bridge to Dystopia," 125.
[103] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 123–37.

Dumbledore observes, to "hold a full criminal trial to deal with a simple matter of underage magic!"[104] Yet, in another trial, Ludo Bagman gets off scot-free just because several of those on the jury are fans of his.[105] Numerous other examples of corruption connected with oppression are seen in the books. Policing is carried out with excessive violence.[106] The Minister uses the Dementors (prison guards/police) for his own selfish purposes, thus subverting the law.[107] Teachers attempt to give students Veritaserum without consent.[108] Laws are enacted from the Ministry to suppress the actions of students at Hogwarts, severely limit their extracurricular activities, and keep them from meeting together in groups—essentially attempting to take away their agency and voice.[109]

The similarities between the institutionalized oppression in Harry Potter and in the Gospel of Mark are quite significant. One example is the justice system, including legal proceedings. The amount of corruption occurring in the arrest, trials, and execution of Jesus is astounding. He is arrested surreptitiously and violently, "with swords and clubs" (14:43, 48). There is repeated false testimony at his trial before the priestly council (14:56–57). The chief priests, scribes, and elders hand Jesus over to Pilate knowing he would likely be crucified (15:1).[110] Pilate knows Jesus is innocent but he still has him crucified (15:10, 14–15). Jesus is humiliated and beaten multiple times (14:65; 15:15, 19–20). At the end of all this, he is executed by crucifixion—a cruel and

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[104] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 137; cf. 139.
[105] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 515.
[106] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 635–36, 644.
[107] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 610.
[108] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 555, 656. Veritaserum is a magical truth serum.
[109] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 313.
[110] This particular group (chief priests, elders, and scribes) is mentioned together at other points during the arrest and trial process (14:43, 53; 15:1).

violent death (15:15, 20, 24–28). Myers observes that the author of Mark frames the story of the trials and crucifixion to show how the colonial and colonized rulers cooperate with each other to carry out corrupt court proceedings leading to a cruel and violent execution.[111] This shows the capacity of the imperialist powers to tyrannize and oppress. That just one person should undergo so much oppression by the power structures is an indication that the corruption in the system is extensive. Indeed, Jesus has already identified several instances of such systemic corruption in the few days he has been in Jerusalem. He says of the temple that it has been made into "a den of robbers" (11:17). He tells the vineyard parable about oppression and the scribes, chief priests, and elders (11:27) recognize that it is about them. The scribes, in particular, receive a scathing condemnation from Jesus for their grasping after honour and for their exploitation of widows (12:38–40).

There are other examples of oppression in the Gospel. A common pattern of exploitation involves appropriating the land, goods, and money belonging to others for one's own gain. In the account of the rich man in Mark 10:17–27, we see someone who is not willing to sell what he has in order to give to the poor. Horsley points out that the reason for this is that the man must have acquired such excessive wealth (10:22) by exploiting and defrauding the vulnerable and thereby broken the very commandments he claims to have followed since he was young (10:19–20).[112] This fits with Jesus' substitution of the commandment to "not defraud" for the one against coveting (10:19). Related to this, Gundry makes note of the circumstance of "the wealthy not needing to

[111] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 408.
[112] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 123. See also Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 274.

covet, but liking to defraud."[113] It is significant that this man has become wealthy by cheating the very ones for whom he is unwilling to give up his wealth. His commitment to his fortune is powerful. In all this, the Domination System appears to be rotten to the core. This parallels the depravity of the system we see in the Harry Potter books.

Corrupt as the wizarding system is under the leadership of Fudge and later Scrimgeour, it becomes even more so when it is dominated by Voldemort. This is done mostly behind the scenes. "The Dark Wizard institutionalizes his psychological weapons of fear, suspicion, and paranoia by remaining largely invisible to the wizarding citizenry."[114] Voldemort aims to control every aspect of society. At his command, the Death Eaters infiltrate the Ministry as well as taking over the press and the educational system (Hogwarts)—banning Muggle-born students there.[115] They set up the Muggle-born registry.[116] All of these involve policy being used to exclude and oppress Muggles and Muggle-born wizards as part of their systemic oppression.

The way that Voldemort influences and controls the Ministry of Magic and other wizarding systems from behind the scenes is relevant to the presence (or lack thereof) of the Roman Empire. Other than Pilate, there is not a great deal of explicit reference to Rome in Mark's Gospel, but its presence is felt nonetheless. Two of these references (10:33, 42), both of which refer to Rome as "the Gentiles," occur in the passage of interest in this study, and they both are incisive in how they describe what Rome is doing in terms of oppression and tyranny.

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[113] Gundry, *Mark*, 553.
[114] Bealer, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix," 186.
[115] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 207–10.
[116] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 257–63.

Juxtaposing Harry Potter with the Gospel of Mark has certainly been shown to be fruitful for the question of systemic oppression. Harry Potter readers can find hints or echoes of our own society and government in the Harry Potter narrative, as well as similar categories of oppression.

Resistance

Resistance is a recurrent and central theme of both the Harry Potter novels and the Gospel of Mark. There is, in fact, a *great deal* of resistance in both narratives. Harry resists Voldemort and other authorities who misuse their power throughout the series. Jesus is also a powerful resister throughout Mark's Gospel.

Injustice and oppression sometimes act as a spark that ignites justice and resistance efforts. In the Harry Potter story, attacks on the Longbottoms lead to "a wave of fury" that contributes to such efforts.[117] Oppressive rules sometimes backfire and lead to the opposite response of what was intended.[118] The actions of tyrants and oppressors often motivate the very resistance movements that weaken them or bring them down. Dumbledore says of Voldemort that he "himself created his worst enemy, just as tyrants everywhere do! Have you any idea how much tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realize that, one day, amongst their many victims, there is sure to be one who rises against them and strikes back!"[119] Likewise, the Roman imperial context in the Gospel of Mark is seen as a source of the oppression that inspires resistance to it. Jesus was also building up a movement. If he is demonstrated to be modelling resistance, then

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[117] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 524. Neville's parents, Frank and Alice Longbottom, were tortured into insanity by Death Eaters (followers of Voldemort).

[118] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 513.

[119] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 477; cf. Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 46.

this movement can be said to be a resistance movement. In this section I will explore how juxtaposing the Harry Potter story, especially the character of Harry himself, alongside Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Mark, will highlight the commitment to resistance by Jesus.

I believe it needs to be stated, however, that the resistance that Jesus promotes and engages in is of a particular quality which distinguishes it from other common approaches to resistance, both in the first century and today. Rather than using violence or passivity, Jesus modeled the third way described by Wink—nonviolent direct action. In doing so, he stood against the oppressive violence of the tyrannical authorities.[120] A few initial points will illustrate the nonviolent nature of his ministry, although I will explore it more fully in the following discussion on resistance in Mark.

When Jesus sends out the twelve in pairs he does not instruct them to retaliate if they do not receive hospitality, but rather shake the dust off their feet (6:11).[121] Instead of telling his followers to take part in defending Jerusalem, he tells them they "must flee to the mountains" (13:14).[122] Despite the fact that Jesus does not authorize or partake in violent activities, his model of resistance is not diminished. His is not a military

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[120] I do not intend to resolve the issue of violence in resistance but to consider how Jesus would do resistance and what kind of resister he was.

[121] See also Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 214.

[122] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 430. It can be argued that Jesus' purpose was to help his disciples escape extreme danger, especially the vulnerable such as "those who are pregnant and . . . nursing infants" (13:17). However, I concur with Myers that there seems to be another reason. Jesus' words indicate he does not intend his followers to respond to this situation with violence or, indeed, any kind of resistance. Otherwise, he would have left the door open to oppose something so serious as "the desolating sacrilege" (13:14). I see two possibilities here: either the response to such an extreme form of desecration was likely to be the kind of violent activity Jesus would not want his followers to engage in or, in the context of 13:2, Jesus was aware that the temple would be destroyed and would not want his disciples to participate in resisting this. Both of these could be true. (I acknowledge that these two options are speculative.)

revolution but it does involve "a message and program of revolutionary change."[123] The character of Harry Potter, on the other hand, does use violence at times, most predominantly in self-defence or defence of others. He is not proactively violent. Jesus goes beyond this by having a completely nonviolent posture. There is a great deal of nonviolent civil disobedience in the Harry Potter books. Much of the time, acts of civil disobedience are carried out as clandestinely as possible and are therefore forms of hidden resistance.

In opposing oppression, there is a great variety of strategies that can be used. I will explore the following approaches to resistance in the two texts: contrapuntal readings; being an ally; community and fictive kinship; love and compassion; inclusion; self-advocacy; humour and story; civil disobedience; speaking truth to power.

Contrapuntal Readings

Contrapuntal approaches are an important part of resisting in both postcolonial and feminist criticism. This is because they provide a counterpoint to certain ideologies, particularly those that are imperial and patriarchal in focus. They add another voice to the conversation. This involves the interpretation of the texts, which is an important part of reading. Reading goes well beyond just taking in the words that are on the page. One of the ways a contrapuntal approach is taken in both the Harry Potter narrative and the Gospel of Mark is through the portrayal of characters who model contrapuntal reading. There are several examples of Hermione reading contrapuntally in the Harry Potter literature. She resists the interpretation of the textbook *Hogwarts, A History* because it

[123] Horsley, "Introduction," 7.

leaves out important events relating to house-elf injustice.[124] She also challenges the textbook assigned by Professor Umbridge as well as her curriculum choices. She models how to engage with texts in a way that far exceeds her teacher's competence.[125] Moreover, Hermione's critical interpretation of Umbridge's speech on the first day of school uncovers a hidden meaning behind Umbridge's words, which Harry and Ron had not perceived: "It means the Ministry's interfering at Hogwarts."[126] Hermione helps her friends and classmates imagine new perspectives other than the ones they encounter in certain books and discourses. She thus helps to provide a transformative experience for them. In becoming a more critical reader, throughout the series of books, she herself is also transformed. Essentially, she "becomes an Ideal Reader: one who enlivens written texts, freeing them from the static realm, and operating as co-creator to the text through her dialogic reading."[127] Dialogic reading is quite similar to contrapuntal reading in that it engages in dialogue with another perspective.

In a comparable way, Jesus communicates a fresh and creative approach to looking at scriptural texts. Jesus' concern for people is at the heart of how he interprets scripture and tradition. In Mark 2:23–28, he recognizes that the Pharisees' interpretation of scriptural tradition influences how they regard and respond to those who are experiencing hunger, in this case his disciples who are plucking grain on the sabbath.[128] Jesus' response is rather to look at the underlying purpose or principle of the law. He

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[124] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 209–10.
[125] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 217–20, 283–84; Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 199.
[126] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 193.
[127] Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 203.
[128] This is not to say that Jesus' merely engaging with this passage is unique. There is evidence in later rabbinical tradition of debate surrounding this text in relation to the Sabbath (*b. B. Menaḥ*. 10–15. See Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 116). Nor is Jesus' take on the Sabbath being provided for the sake of humanity alien to later Judaism (Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 119).

declares that the sabbath was given "for humankind" (2:27). His perspective is that, if an interpretation or application of scripture or oral tradition is harmful or has a negative impact on human beings, then it is not fulfilling its true, underlying purpose. This reads against the grain of how the law was interpreted by the Pharisees who came to him at this time. Jesus offers them another way of looking at it, a key part of reading contrapuntally. He provides them with a potentially transformative reading of the biblical account of David and the holy bread (1 Sam 21:1–6) to give them an opportunity to see things in a new way that puts others first.[129] A compassionate approach to interpreting scripture is therefore a key element of resistance. Both the Harry Potter works and the Gospel of Mark thus give us examples of how to read, analyze, and interpret contrapuntally.

In addition to these models of contrapuntal reading enacted by the characters, texts can be contrapuntal in themselves. We see this in the Gospel of Mark in how the Markan composer resists the discourse of empire widely promoted at that time. A central component of this discourse that Mark opposed was the imperial cult. It is understandable that he would be resistant to messages like those that spoke of "a god on earth we shall call Augustus."[130] Such messages exalted "the person of the emperor to a superhuman dimension" and were closely associated with religious elements.[131] The Markan evangelist engages with such discourse contrapuntally by what he composes as the Gospel. He thus both *reads* and *writes* contrapuntally. At different points he coopts the language of empire for his own purposes. He writes about the imperial message

[129] The phrase "Have you never read" (2:25) is used by Jesus to draw his listeners' attention to a particular passage of scripture as he similarly does in Mark 12:26 (Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 115–16).

[130] Horace, *Odes* 3:5:2–3.

[131] Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 48.

along with a resistant, alternative message. In this way, he resists and subverts the imperial agenda. One example is the phrase "good news" which appears in both Mark 1:1 and Mark 1:14–15.

The following decree was passed in 9 BCE by a group of cities in Asia in order to honour the birthday of Augustus by adopting it as their New Year's Day:

> Whereas the providence which divinely ordered our lives created with zeal and munificence the most perfect good for our lives by producing Augustus and filling him with virtue for the benefaction of mankind, blessing us and those after us with a savior who put an end to war and established peace; and whereas Caesar when he appeared exceeded the hopes of all who had anticipated *good tidings*, not only surpassing the benefactors born before him but not even leaving those to come any hope of surpassing him; and whereas the birthday of the god marked for the world the *beginning of the good tidings* through his coming.[132]

The parallels to Mark 1:1 ("The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.") are quite evident. Rufus Fears describes the words of the decree as follows: "The nativity of Augustus the God, in the words of the decree, marked for the world the beginning of good tidings through his advent."[133] Fears is not a biblical scholar but his description of the birth decree of Augustus ties in well with Mark 1:1 as well as 1:14–15. The Gospel of Mark applies some of this terminology of divinity used of the emperors to Jesus and his ministry as well as in defiance of the empire.

According to Craig Evans, the Markan incipit challenged not only the emperor cult honouring Augustus but also Vespasian. He finds evidence for this in Josephus

[132] In Lewis and Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, 64. Emphasis added.
[133] Fears, "Rome," 104.

where there is a reference to celebration and sacrifices presented in honour of the good news of Vespasian's accession.[134]

In Mark 1:14 Jesus proclaims "the good news of God" and in 1:15 he reveals the empire ("kingdom") of God in contrast to the empires of the world—especially, in the first century, the Roman Empire.[135] He presents "the kingdom of God" as a preferable alternative to the idea of the empire of Rome. Since "Mark is taking dead aim at Caesar and his legitimating myths," his story demonstrates a noticeable subversiveness already in the first line, and further developed in 1:14–15.[136] By expropriating the title "good news" for his narrative, the Markan evangelist is parodying the original Roman use of the term in the Asian birthday decree.[137] I suggest that he is specifically using "parodic banging" where, despite the same term used in the two references to good news (εὐαγγέλιον), their juxtaposition shows them to be dissonant and at odds.[138] In other words, Mark would have been showing the good news of Jesus to be a very different thing from the "good news" of Augustus. In Mark 1:14–15, and in the context of 1:1, the Gospel writer portrays Jesus as a resister who proclaims the good news—"good news that promises yet to overthrow the structures of domination in our world."[139]

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[134] Evans, "Beginning of the Good News," 93–95. This is, of course, dependent on a relatively later dating of the Gospel of Mark since Vespasian was emperor from 69 to 79 CE. See Josephus, *War* 4:618.

[135] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 16–17.

[136] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 124.

[137] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 426. Concerning Mark 1:1 as a response to what was being claimed about the emperors, Darrell Bock observes: "Mark is noting those rulers have nothing on Jesus. In terms of significance to the world, Mark is making the amazing claim that this Jewish Galilean teacher has something to offer that the rulers of Rome do not: access to God's rule. God's good news is distinct from what Rome celebrates" (Bock, *Mark*, 108).

[138] Chambers, *Parody*, 7, 68.

[139] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, xxiii.

Consequently, the language that Mark uses acts contrapuntally and subversively to respond to and challenge the message of the emperor cult.

The Harry Potter story, by means of the character Hermione, helps to highlight Jesus as a contrapuntal reader. This, in turn, can reveal how the Gospel itself is a contrapuntal work. It provides a contrapuntal reading which engages in dialogue with empire and unmasks the flaws in the Pax Romana, including the emperor cult. Rather than exalting and deifying the emperor, he is shown to have no clothes.

Allies and Bystanders

In order to explore resistance, it is important to have an appreciation for who is doing the resisting (the allies or resisters). I define an ally as someone who stands in solidarity with a person or group who is marginalized and who is willing to resist on their behalf.[140] This corresponds with those whom Thalhammer et al. refer to as "*courageous resisters*" (those who are "other-oriented" and intentional about their resistance work).[141] They commit to it as a sustained effort in spite of facing risk or cost (emotional as well as material) to themselves. Being an ally or resister does not preclude being marginalized oneself. Many resisters act on behalf of their own marginalized group or stand in solidarity with other groups who are marginalized in a different way.[142]

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[140] The term "solidarity" is particularly helpful because it is usually expressed as solidarity *with* rather than solidarity *for*.

[141] Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance*, 5; cf. 4. Emphasis in original.

[142] An example would be a person in the LGBTQ community who advocates for Black people.

There are several examples of those who are trying to be allies in the Harry Potter books.[143] Hagrid, with his pink umbrella, has limited magical power but he is still a passionate and faithful ally to Dumbledore.[144] The centaur Firenze goes against what his peers expect of him and is therefore ostracized because he acts as an ally to Harry.[145] The healing compassion and action of Fawkes the phoenix in support of Harry is a good example of allyship.[146] Hermione, even with all her extra work in third year, still finds time to do research for Hagrid's case to defend Buckbeak the hippogriff. She is a true advocate and ally for Buckbeak who is vulnerable in this situation.[147] Harry shows himself to be an effective ally for the Muggle-born witches and wizards he is in solidarity with by working *with* them as they escape the Ministry of Magic (He shouts, "Who's got wands?" to assemble them).[148] Harry and his friends have allies they did not know they had, like Dumbledores' brother Aberforth, supporting them from behind the scenes.[149] A Patronus can be seen as a symbol of an ally—"a guardian which acts as a shield between you and the Dementor."[150] These examples of allies all demonstrate powerful forms of resistance.

Jesus is also portrayed as a powerful ally in the Gospel of Mark. He consistently stands with those who are vulnerable and marginalized. His healings and exorcisms promote inclusion.[151] He associates and socializes with those identified as "tax

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[143] I find it helpful to frame allyship in terms of "trying" to or "working" to be an ally rather than merely a label one gives oneself.

[144] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 48.

[145] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 187–89.

[146] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 232, 234–39.

[147] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 202.

[148] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 265.

[149] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 557–59. Aberforth is Professor Dumbledore's brother.

[150] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 176.

[151] See pp. 161–63 below.

collectors and sinners," although he is questioned about it by "the scribes of the Pharisees" (2:16). All these activities promote a more just society for those he is in solidarity with. Like several of the characters in the wizarding world, including Harry himself, Jesus' role as an ally is an important part of his resistance against the forces of oppression and evil.

The character Rita Skeeter can be considered the opposite of an ally, what I would call an anti-ally.[152] She refuses to hear Harry's truth and insists on saying or writing whatever she wants for her own purposes. She uses her privilege to benefit herself rather than using it to stand in solidarity with someone whose voice is not being heard. She does not pass the quill (mic) and she does not care about those who are peripheral to whatever she feels is *her* story.[153] She makes it clear that she is only concerned with financial gain and not about providing information.[154] It is interesting that, as a journalist, she does not use her gifts to tell the stories of others from their perspective. This is a missed opportunity.

Another way to refer to what I call anti-allies is bystanders. Bystanders can be defined as people who neither actively perpetrate injustice nor act as allies who resist such injustice. They are also not the direct victims of injustice. Contrary to popular belief, they are not "morally neutral" but can even add to the damage done by perpetrators. This can be quite far reaching.[155]

The twelve disciples closest to Jesus can be said to be bystanders for much of Mark's Gospel. When opportunities arise to stand up for or include the marginalized,

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[152] Skeeter writes for the wizarding newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*.
[153] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 266–69, 275–76.
[154] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 501–2; Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 198.
[155] Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance*, 4, 40.

they do not take them. The example of turning away those who are bringing children to Jesus (10:13–16), even though he had recently been talking to them about the importance of welcoming a child (9:37) is telling. They also want their privilege as Jesus' disciples to benefit them: they want to be considered the greatest (9:34) and James and John want positions of honour (10:35–37). They allow their fear to prevent them from speaking out or acting. They desert Jesus (14:50) and Peter denies him (14:66–72).

With respect to the Harry Potter novels, the character who seems to make the most progress in the journey from bystander to ally is Professor Horace Slughorn. Slughorn has the characteristics of a definitive bystander. He is attached to his privilege and life of comfort and is quite reluctant to do anything that would interfere with these. He does not want to put himself at risk.[156] His fear is therefore a major factor in his standing by while Harry and Dumbledore need information to overcome Voldemort.[157] He is a pleasant person who seems to care for his students, but it is quite a challenge to get him to cross the line towards being an ally or resister. This is where Harry comes in.

Thalhammer notes that strong allies can "model behavior that may help transform inactive bystanders into courageous resisters."[158] Harry gets Slughorn to *imagine* what it would be like to be an ally—someone who is able to summon up the courage to do the right thing and to be brave like Harry's mother Lily whom he so much admired.[159] Slughorn is therefore on his way to becoming an ally. He takes an active

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[156] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 67, 68, 72–73.
[157] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 356.
[158] Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance*, 39.
[159] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 457–59.

role in the Battle of Hogwarts and, accompanied by Professor McGonagall and Kingsley Shacklebolt, he even battles Voldemort.[160]

Jesus is also an ally who inspires his followers to also become allies. In addition to modeling allyship by including others, one of the most significant ways that Jesus encourages others to imagine what it would be like to be an ally is through his teachings. His teachings challenge, uphold the marginalized, and inspire empathy by urging his audience to put others first. Jesus also inspires imagination in his stories. His parables evoke images illustrating how the kingdom of God is something much bigger than his listeners might imagine: they can have a harvest "thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold" (4:20); "to those who have, more will be given" (4:25); there is growth and unexpected yield (4:27–28); and a small mustard seed can produce a plant so large "that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" (4:32).[161] Jesus sees the temptation and risk for his followers to pursue privilege, entitlement, power, and "glory" (10:37), so makes use of a number of means to communicate to them that "it is not so among you" even before he actually says these words to them in Mark 10:43. Jesus is a worthy model of how to use imagination, communication, and inspiration to encourage his followers to become better resisters and allies.

Community and Fictive Kinship

In both the Harry Potter story and the Gospel of Mark, community and new patterns of family help to fuel efforts of resistance. Resistance is a communal effort. A community

[160] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 735.

[161] Concerning the latter parable about the mustard seed, Myers even suggests that what is being described is something to rival the Roman Empire and its overshadowing powers (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 181, 194. See Ezek 31:2–14).

or "network of allies" is vital for enabling strong resistance. Networking provides information and models new ways of looking at things, encourages and sustains those within the movement, and affords valuable resources.[162] These features of networking and community are central to the resistance movement in the Harry Potter narrative. For instance, Sirius Black, by offering his house on Grimmauld Place as headquarters, provides a valuable resource to the Order of the Phoenix.[163]

Community is key in providing much-needed encouragement and support to the resisters. The DA members help to buoy each other up while at the same time keeping each other grounded.[164] It is significant that it is at Hogwarts that Harry finds community because it is Hogwarts that he considers his home.[165] Essentially, he has a new family there. Both Harry Potter and Markan Jesus redefine family. Rohrbaugh notes that "membership criteria in the Jesus group differ from those of the synagogue, where blood, physical, or genealogical concerns are paramount. Jesus' surrogate family is non-biological."[166] It is made up of Jesus' disciples, his followers, as seen in his words in Mark 3:35: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." According to Stephen Barton, these words of Jesus emphasize an understanding of his community of followers where their "most significant kinship ties are fictive."[167]

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[162] Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance*, 29; cf. 27.

[163] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 76.

[164] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 312, 442.

[165] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 697. He thinks of Hogwarts as "the first and best home he had known." Kornfeld and Prothro observe, "At Hogwarts, the notions of home and family are far more complex and multidimensional than in the 'real' world. Family connections and loyalties are bound not by birth and genetics, but by more enduring factors; the roles family members assume are determined . . . by actions and relationships forged among individuals" (Kornfeld and Prothro, "Comedy, Quest, and Community," 124).

[166] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 157.

[167] Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 82. Fictive kinship refers to those who are not related by blood or marriage but rather "have an emotionally significant relationship with another individual that would take on the characteristics of a family relationship" (Poindexter and Valentine, *Introduction to*

Similarly, Harry often values non-blood relationships above the family he was raised by. Both Harry and Jesus therefore place a high value on fictive kinship. The embracing of fictive kinship ties and moving away from sole reliance on non-fictive familial ties can be a radical and challenging process.[168] However, the movement toward fictive kinship involves building a new community with strong ties, as described by Barton:

> From a sociological viewpoint, Mark's presentation of discipleship and family ties is helpfully understood in terms of the model of early Christianity as a social world in the making. In these terms, Mark's Gospel is suggestive of a strongly counter-cultural group ethos, heavily indebted to the world-view and traditions of Jewish apocalyptic. At the personal level, the believer's identity is defined, no longer primarily in relation to his/her ties of natural kinship and household belonging (since here, the expectation is more one of resistance and conflict), but in terms of ties of fictive or spiritual kinship to Jesus.[169]

In both the Harry Potter series and the New Testament Gospels, such communities can provide invaluable resources and benefits for their members. There are a number of similarities as well to Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of *ekklēsia*. The idea of a surrogate or chosen family can be particularly meaningful for those who, for one reason or

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Human Services, 134). Note that Barton does not say that these fictive ties are the *only* kinship ties that are significant. Later he remarks concerning Mark 10:28–31 that there is "no animosity to family and household ties *per se*" (Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 107). The intention in this particular passage is not to eliminate non-fictive kinship ties but to set up a fictive community for those who have lost access to familial ties. There is evidence in the Gospel of Mark that, in encouraging a paradigm of fictive kinship, Jesus is not advocating for the elimination of all family ties. For example, in Mark 7:9–13 he encourages adult children to honour and support their parents (Moxnes, "What is Family?," 34). In the episode where Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31), family ties continue even after the calling of the disciples. Contra Joseph Kozar who finds this episode surprising in light of Jesus' apparent "demand [for] a complete break with family" in Mark 1:16–20 (Kozar, "Forsaking your Mother-in-law," 41). In light of this, Kozar questions the disciples' "commitment . . . to accept Jesus' radical itinerant call." He also emphasizes that Peter's mother-in-law "remains behind in the household" and that this signifies that she is not fully part of the new family community. "Yet the inbreaking of the Kingdom and its newness seems confined to the public (male) domain, the figure of the mother- in-law remains trapped in the old eon" (Kozar, "Forsaking your Mother-in-law," 45). However, there is no evidence in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus' new discipleship community is restricted to those who physically follow him or, indeed, to male disciples (cf. Mark 15:40–41).

[168] The disciples who left their fathers in order to follow Jesus (Mark 1:16–20) would have made such a radical and difficult break (Moxnes, "What is Family?," 34).

[169] Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 123.

another, are separated or estranged from their families.[170] The *Harry Potter* books therefore highlight an important theme to many.

One of the reasons that these new, reconfigured families are important in the Markan Gospel world and in the world of Harry Potter is that both Jesus and Harry were, at times, not "at home" with their families and even mistreated. In Mark 3:21, Jesus' family "went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.'" He was also rejected in his hometown which led him to declare: "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house" (Mark 6:4). Harry is treated ungenerously by the Dursleys, even to the point of not being fed as well as Dudley.[171] In *The Order of the Phoenix* Harry describes how he does not feel like his home is with the Dursleys but somewhere else. "He felt as though his heart was going to explode with pleasure; he was flying again, flying away from Privet Drive as he'd been fantasising about all summer, he was going home."[172]

There are numerous situations in the novels where community and solidarity help the characters fulfill the mission of defying Voldemort and resisting oppression. Harry, Hermione, and Ron work together to follow their enemy to the Philosopher's Stone and each contributes their individual gifts, skills, and talents to collectively achieve that goal.[173] Harry is certainly not a "solitary hero." Rather, when facing various challenges throughout the books, he works best with others and prefers not to act on his own.[174] Hermione plays a key role by removing "obstacles from Harry's path" so that he

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[170] The concept of a "chosen family" is something that many resonate with nowadays, especially those who have experienced abuse or rejection within their families of origin.

[171] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 92.

[172] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 55.

[173] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 201–8.

[174] Wolosky, "Gendered Heroism," 119.

can effectively challenge Voldemort. [175] Hermione and Ron also commit to work with Harry to search for and destroy the Horcruxes: "We'll go with you, wherever you're going."[176] This finds a strong parallel with Peter's declaration that "we have left everything and followed you" (Mark 10:28), with "everything" including home and family.[177] Harry's friends and others from the Order of the Phoenix come together as the seven Polyjuice versions of him to get him to safety and they risk their lives in doing so.[178] Unity and solidarity, important factors for sustaining the movement, are seen unmistakably in the Battle of Hogwarts. The enormous groundswell of support from a variety of groups at this pivotal occasion, and the cooperation between them, is a critical factor in the downfall of Voldemort.[179] This kind of commitment is also seen in the women in Jesus' movement, who followed him to Jerusalem, supported him in practical ways, and watched as he was crucified (Mark 15:40–41). Their generous dedication and service is a contrast to disciples like James and John whose grasping for power I will explore in the next chapter.

Sarah Reschan points out that it is overwhelmingly "outcasts, underdogs, and ordinary people" who provide the essential base for the movement against Voldemort. "While Harry may be the one who beats Voldemort himself, his triumph would not be complete without the united resistance of so many others."[180] Similarly, Jesus advocates for the welcome of those who are at the margins of society. An example is the children

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[175] Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 201.

[176] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 607.

[177] William Lane observes that, while Peter has somewhat of a self-congratulatory tone, there is also evidence that he has taken seriously Jesus' command to the rich man in 10:21 to give up everything (Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 371).

[178] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 45–62.

[179] Oakes, "Secret Domination," 154; Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 608–50, 694–97, 728–46.

[180] Reschan, "Bridge to Dystopia," 134.

whose welcome he insists on (Mark 9:37; 10:13–16). He also urges for the inclusion of someone working miracles in his name, even though he is not one of his core followers (9:38–41). The movement is at its best when the welcome is wide and everyone can participate in its efforts. Essentially, then, resistance and allyship are done in community and are only *truly* effective if they are done in community.[181]

Based on all of this, readers would be able to appreciate that many of the characteristics of community and chosen family in the Harry Potter narrative are seen also in the new community Jesus is advocating: solidarity and commitment, encouragement, welcome and inclusiveness, practical support, and adopting new approaches to doing things. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is forming a new community where the values of the empire are renounced and the values of God's kingdom are embraced. This new community involves a reconfiguration of family. It is a community where things are turned upside down. There is a pronounced inversion. In Mark 10:31, Jesus summarizes what he has just said about families, and about leaving them for him and "for the sake of the good news" (10:29), by saying, "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." In Mark 3:31–35, by calling those who do "the will of God" (3:35) his family, rather than his own birth family, Jesus is reconfiguring accepted family structures in a subversive way. These two teachings envision a new way of doing things. Furthermore, those who join Jesus as his new family have generally come from the lower economic and social strata of first-century Palestinian society. He welcomes and

[181] If we think of ourselves as a lone "saviour" or "rescuer" with a "*saving-people thing*" and that is how we define our allyship, we are not really working in solidarity with others (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 646. Emphasis in original). Effective movements of resistance throughout history (such as the Baltic Way human chain of 1989 and the American Civil Rights movement of the twentieth century) as well as in current events (such as Black Lives Matter and the Pride movement) show the importance of working in solidarity with others.

includes those who are often marginalized and have been rejected by society. By means of his teachings on families, Jesus turns the dominant "social order upside down" and moves those generally found at what would be considered the bottom of the heap to a central position of importance.[182] It is therefore this new community, this new way of doing family, that is the foundation for resisting empire. Moreover, the existence of this new family, in and of itself, stands in opposition to the empire's values. This reflects the reconfiguration of community and family in the Harry Potter narrative as well. The existence of strong communities is what helps to conquer the imperial powers embodied in Voldemort.

Love and Compassion

Community and family are closely connected with love and compassion. While lack of community contributes to Voldemort's defeat, there is one aspect of community that particularly leads to his demise—love.[183] To begin with, love is important in creating bonds between the members of the resistance movement. It provides a meaningful connection between them and inspires them to continue resisting.[184] This is seen nowhere more clearly than in the ceiling mural that Luna paints in her bedroom with the words "*friends . . . friends . . . friends*" on it.[185]

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[182] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 431; cf. 435.

[183] Voldemort tends to work independently and prides himself on his self-sufficiency (Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 260). In his arrogance, he "confided in no one and operated alone" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 620). Thus, his lack of appreciation for community contributes to his defeat.

[184] Bealer observes that this is the "most crucial method of resisting Voldemort: forging and maintaining relationships to other people" (Bealer, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix," 184).

[185] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 417.

An important part of love and compassion is the ability to humanize one's opponents or enemies—to have mercy on them. Harry displays this quality at several points in his story. He was already demonstrating fairness and compassion toward his opponents in the Triwizard Tournament: "Harry wouldn't have let his worst enemy face those monsters unprepared."[186] Harry protects Dudley against a common enemy (Dementors) even though Dudley has bullied him in the past.[187] However, Harry's most noteworthy display of mercy is to Voldemort, the one who killed his parents and tries to kill him several times. Early in *Deathly Hallows*, Hermione tells Harry and Ron that the only way to overcome having divided oneself into Horcruxes is remorse and that the process is "excruciatingly painful."[188] Later, at his final battle with Voldemort, Harry uses this information to give Riddle the option for remorse and thereby give him a way out.[189] Voldemort's refusal is yet another step toward his ultimate downfall.

We also see Jesus humanizing people in the Gospel of Mark, including those who are in groups that he resists. Two occasions, in particular, are of interest here. One concerns the scribe who comes to him in Mark 12:28–34, asking about the most important commandment. The content of what Jesus shares with the man (the two commands to love God and love others) is about love in itself. Beyond that, how Jesus treats the man is loving and compassionate. Jesus humanizes him even though very soon after that he condemns scribes as a group for their injustice (12:38–40). He is not above showing respect and mercy to an individual scribe who shows potential for change. In

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[186] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 298–99.

[187] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 21–23. This merciful act leads to Dudley eventually seeing Harry in a new light and affirming: "I don't think you're a waste of space" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 40).

[188] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 103.

[189] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 741.

the story of the rich man who comes to Jesus (Mark 10:17–22), Mark specifically states "Jesus … loved him." He shows him how to live a compassionate life for others by selling his possessions and giving the proceeds to those in need. In these two stories, Jesus shows each of the men a new way, a way that will lead to justice, love, and compassion toward others. The scribe is told he is not so far from God's kingdom, but the rich man goes away dejected because he chooses not to follow this new way. This act of providing a new way is a powerful means of resistance. It assumes there is a possibility in opponents and enemies to consider another approach, hopefully a more just and loving one.[190] This has great potential for reform and provides hope for making change through peace-making. However, it depends on the response of the individual or group. Neither the rich man who approached Jesus nor Voldemort chose to follow the better way they were offered. Indeed, Voldemort not only chooses to reject the way of love but is, in the end, conquered by it.

One key reason that love is able to defeat Voldemort is that he minimalizes it. When speaking with Harry of Lily's love protecting him, Voldemort recognizes it as "a powerful counter-charm" but dismisses it as "merely a lucky chance."[191] Because he does not think love has real power, he does not keep his defenses up and love becomes *even more powerful* against him. He has no idea the magnitude of this power being wielded against him, a power that Harry possesses in large quantities but of which Voldemort has none.[192] Dumbledore remarks to Harry: "That which Voldemort does not

[190] This fits well with Wink's concept of Jesus' "third way, a way that is neither submission nor assault, neither flight nor fight, a way that can secure . . . human dignity and begin to change the power equation" (Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 185). One of the strategies of this approach is to "[s]eek the oppressor's transformation" (Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 187).

[191] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 233.

[192] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 743.

value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. *Nothing*. That they have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped."[193] Love is the *only* power that can overcome Voldemort.[194] In the same way that Lily's love has acted as a protective spell to defend Harry against the attacks of Voldemort, Harry's love and sacrifice act as a protective spell for those he loves so that Voldemort can no longer torture or oppress them.[195] Moreover, it is Harry's attitude of self-sacrifice that contributes to his laying aside the Elder Wand. It is thus the immense and underappreciated power of love that brings Voldemort down.

Like Dumbledore, but in contrast to Voldemort, Jesus recognizes the power of love. This is shown in a number of ways. He affirms the importance of love for God and others (Mark 12:28–31). He has compassion for the crowds "because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34), and because they are hungry (8:2). He provides many acts of service to help and heal people. Above all, he is willing to sacrifice himself for others (10:45). All of these are acts of resistance in that they promote inclusion, hope, an end to suffering and bondage, and a better way. Love and compassion are therefore a critical part of this hopeful resistance.

Juxtaposing Harry Potter with Jesus highlights the love and compassion in both, including their willingness to show mercy to their opponents. This also underscores the importance of love and compassion for effective resistance. However, Jesus goes beyond Harry in showing love. One reason for this is that he is consistent in how he

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[193] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 709–10. Emphasis in original.
[194] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 477.
[195] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 738.

loves, whereas there are times when Harry does not show love or compassion to a particular person.[196]

Inclusion

Part of reforming corrupt systems and patterns of doing things is making them more inclusive. Inclusiveness is a high priority for Harry. Harry's consistent stance against Voldemort throughout the books is also a stance against what Voldemort stands for—an emphasis on racial purity. It is also therefore a stance of inclusion. While working with several Muggle-born witches and wizards for their rescue from the Ministry of Magic, Harry shouts out: "Their blood is pure." With this declaration, he is including those who have been excluded by the magical government.[197] Inclusion is key in creating an environment where resistance is likely to occur. Having an inclusive stance plays an important role in people then taking action for those they are including. This is what happens with Harry Potter; envisioning that the blood of these people is pure leads to him speaking out and acting in solidarity with them.

Inclusion involves intentional action to welcome and include those who have been previously excluded and marginalized. Full inclusion of such groups invariably involves systemic change. In the Harry Potter literature, house-elves face significant marginalization and exclusion. It is noteworthy that resistance on behalf of house-elves in the series is not always done wisely or effectively. An example of this is how Hermione goes about advocating for the house-elves.

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[196] For instance, although Harry shows mercy to Dudley at certain times, he mostly disdains him. He does not hold out any hope for Dudley to change and is therefore quite surprised when he does.

[197] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows,* 265–66.

At first glance, Hermione does have many of the qualities needed in a strong ally for the elves. She is passionate, hard-working, concerned, and empathetic.[198] She is also "a remarkably resourceful entrepreneur."[199] However, she seems out of touch with what the elves' needs are as well as what would be an effective name for an organization whose purpose is to advocate for them.[200] Hermione does not actually consult the elves to find out what they want and how they want to achieve it, "the classic mistake of any would-be ally who is not a member of the group he or she is trying to assist."[201] Rowling does not present the elves as partners or leaders in the movement concerned with their freedom and, in the later books, Hermione herself is much less focused on her campaign to free the elves. It has become swallowed up in what are likely perceived by the characters to be more pressing matters, like defeating Voldemort.

Still, some progress is made, particularly in the attitudes of certain characters. Harry begins to see and treat his house-elf Kreacher in a new, more humane way after hearing his story and witnessing Hermione's advocacy of elves.[202] This highlights the importance of story in helping people understand the circumstances of the marginalized and for fueling social justice movements. Ron also has had a change of heart by the end of the series when he proclaims: "We can't order them to die for us."[203] These are improvements, but the underlying systemic oppression and exclusion is not addressed.

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[198] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 230; *Deathly Hallows*, 191–92, 195–96. Brycchan Carey points out that "Rowling alerts us both to Hermione's idealism and to her naiveté" and that this tension is understandable in a teenager trying to figure out her role in important justice concerns (Carey, "Hermione and the House-Elves Revisited," 161).

[199] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 53.

[200] She calls the organization S.P.E.W. Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 198, 331; *Order of the Phoenix*, 230–31. She is, however, concerned that elves are represented in certain Ministry departments (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 198).

[201] Hall, "Marx, Magic," 291.

[202] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 199–200.

[203] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 625.

In fact, the series essentially ends with Harry "wondering whether Kreacher might bring him a sandwich,"[204] thus presenting him "as a relatively humane but otherwise unrepentant slaveholder."[205] In general, "what seems clear throughout is that Rowling sees house-elf enslavement as an institution that is capable of much improvement, but which cannot be eradicated. This is troubling since it militates strongly against the general message of the series, which is that great evils can be overcome, and should be overcome."[206] In other words, there is no way forward envisioned in the books for addressing the systemic problem of elf slavery and dismantling it. Elves remain excluded from full participation in many segments of magical society.

Jesus, however, amplifies Harry's inclusiveness. One of the ways that Jesus is seen to be resisting for the sake of inclusion in the Gospel of Mark is by means of the practice of healing. In Mark, healing contributes to health and physical well-being, but it also brings about liberation and relief from economic and social realities. In the context of discussing several healings in Mark 1:21–39, Myers shows how healing addresses issues such as poverty, unemployment, and oppression by bringing "concrete liberation" to those who have been thus affected.[207] He suggests that by healing illness (defined in social terms) rather than curing disease (only considered from a medical perspective), Jesus brings those who are ill back into community.[208] Healing is therefore a social and political act.

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[204] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 749. This is in the last sentence before the epilogue.
[205] Carey, "Hermione and the House-Elves Revisited," 170. See also Anatol, "The Replication," 113.
[206] Carey, "Hermione and the House-Elves Revisited," 171.
[207] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 144.
[208] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 145.

Jesus was especially known for providing healing to those who were considered "[u]nclean, degraded, and expendables."[209] The leper that Jesus heals in Mark 1:40–45 is someone who would have been considered expendable by society, and therefore degraded and ostracized, as well as more susceptible to malnourishment and poor health.[210] Myers brings some interesting insights to the story. He suggests that Jesus is taking on the priestly responsibility for healing as well as reaching out to touch the man with leprosy. Both of these things are forms of resistance. Myers goes further by saying that the events of this episode only make sense if the man had already been to the priests and been turned away. Jesus therefore challenges their religious system by telling the man to go back to the priests and show them that he is healed "as a witness against them" (1:44).[211] It is therefore possible that, by healing this man, Jesus is protesting unjust practices of religious authorities. However, what *is* clear is that healing this man who was considered unclean would result in him becoming ritually clean and thus able to return to full participation in society.[212] It was an act of resistance by Jesus that brought this about.

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[209] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 151.

[210] Waetjen, *Reordering of Power*, 11.

[211] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 153. This is Myers's translation of 1:44 whereas the NRSV has "as a testimony to them." He points out that 6:11 has translated the same phrase (εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς) "as a testimony against them" although he acknowledges it is an antagonistic situation. He states that it "is a technical phrase in the Gospel for testimony before hostile audiences (6:11; 13:9)." It needs to be pointed out that Jesus' instructions to the man are in accord with the law, although Myers's point is that this did not happen. Cranfield suggests that the correct interpretation of εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς is most probably to provide "evidence for the priests or the people generally of the fact of the cure" but that this is within the context of Jesus' view of the law as "holy and to be respected" (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 94–95). Gundry understands the phrase as a testimony for other people "that the inspecting priest had pronounced him clean" (Gundry, *Mark*, 97). This would certainly fit with the objective of including the healed person back within the community.

[212] Amy-Jill Levine's observation on the topic of ritual uncleanness is pertinent here: "Uncleanness is not a disease, and it implies no moral censure; it is a ritual state which both men and women likely found themselves most of the time." (Levine, "Discharging Responsibility," 387).

Table fellowship in the ministry of Jesus is an important form of resistance in Mark.[213] In 2:15–17, Jesus is eating and associating with those who are considered outsiders, "tax collectors and sinners." The phrase is used three times for emphasis. There is significant concern communicated by "the scribes of the Pharisees" (2:16) as to why these people are being included.[214] Wink submits that the first century Palestinian understanding of "'sinners' referred not to people suffering a subjective state of guilt" but rather to those who were excluded as "social outcasts."[215] They were thus targets of oppression. The inclusion of the "Other" here is therefore an act of protest by Jesus, defying the status quo of who is permitted to come to the table.

Dowd associates the interaction of the Syrophoenician woman and Jesus (Mark 7:24–30) with the second feeding of a multitude occurring shortly after in 8:1–10. She states that the woman's prediction (7:28) comes to pass as evidenced by the fact that there is enough for everyone and no one, including the disciples, is deprived. "At the eschatological banquet that this meal prefigures, everyone has a place at the table, everyone eats at the same time, and everyone has enough (*echortasthesan*, 8:8a)."[216] Werner Kelber sees in the feeding of the 4,000 an act directed specifically toward the Gentiles. He calls it "the Gentile confirmation" and points out that the disciples were instructed to serve the Gentiles. It could therefore be considered a revolutionary act, intended to bring about a challenge to the status quo and the beginnings of a new

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[213] Craig Blomberg concludes, "The general pattern of Christ intimately associating with sinners in table fellowship deserves to remain at the core of what the historical Jesus represented" (Blomberg, "Jesus, Sinners," 61).

[214] Dowd suggests it is an issue of purity (Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 25).

[215] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 115–16. Wink notes that they are to be distinguished from "true sinners, whose evil is not ascribed to them by others, but who have sinned from the heart (Mark 7:21–23)." Hooker suggests that the sinners were considered outcasts but that it was because they were "notorious sinners who deliberately violated the Law." (Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 95).

[216] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 79.

inclusive community.[217] Jesus' response to the needs of the people here is an exemplar for how resistance is to be undertaken. He has "compassion for the crowd" (8:2). Social justice and activism without compassion and a concern for people's practical needs are insufficient. Jesus, on the other hand, offers us a well-rounded model of resistance.

In both Mark 9:36–37 and 10:13–16, Jesus welcomes and embraces children. Welcoming and honouring those who are normally not honoured in this way goes against the status quo. Gundry points out that 9:37 identifies the child as "the object of reception, not imitation."[218] I believe Jesus is trying to communicate through his words and actions surrounding these two incidents, that children belong and that others "such as these" also belong to the new community being formed that is an outflow of God's kingdom (10:14). It is therefore significant that his disciples attempt to turn these children away. They are not welcome. This is reminiscent of some of the characters in the Harry Potter narrative who fall far short in their inclusiveness.

In addition to welcome, Jesus gives children his blessing (10:16). It is interesting that blessing is often associated with what is really privilege. Thus, someone who has the privilege of wealth or status is often thought of, even in our day, as being blessed by God. Yet here and elsewhere in the Gospels (for example, the Beatitudes), it is those who are *not* privileged, such as the children, who are seen as blessed by Jesus. Concerning these two episodes with children, how Jesus interacts with those who are marginalized and exploited, including and welcoming them with honour, is once again seen as an exemplary approach to resistance.

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[217] Kelber, *Mark's Story*, 39. Myers argues that "Table solidarity with gentiles" is at risk because of purity protocols (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 441).

[218] Gundry, *Mark*, 518–19.

Herman Waetjen also suggests that Jesus' response to those who have been excluded and disparaged by society is to turn their world on its head. This approach serves as "a model of how the dispossessed and the oppressed can enter into a reordering of power in order to recover what God willed to all human beings."[219] An inversion occurs. Welcoming and inclusive table fellowship in the Gospel of Mark are forms of resistance in the face of exclusion and oppression. They help to form a new community where all are welcome. Mark's Gospel also shows us that resistance involves the hard work of advocating for the marginalized and dispossessed.[220]

The Harry Potter lens has helped to underscore how Jesus was proactive in including those who have been excluded. Yet Jesus goes beyond Harry in how he welcomes the marginalized to full participation within the community. He amplifies the character of Harry Potter in this respect. The disciples are more like Harry and his friends in their failure to fully welcome those who have been marginalized. All of them have much to learn in order to be more inclusive and thereby effectively resist the exclusive and oppressive systems in their respective societies.

Self-advocacy

Advocacy and empowerment are important elements of resistance. Just as important, and often springing from empowerment of and advocacy for others, are self-advocacy and self-empowerment. Self-empowerment involves empowering oneself, but it is often closely related to having been empowered by others in the past. Harry's friend Neville

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[219] Waetjen, *Reordering of Power*, 16.

[220] Walter Brueggemann has a helpful definition of the dispossessed: "those denied land, denied power, [and] denied place or voice in history" (Brueggemann, *The Land*, 191).

Longbottom is a good example of this. Harry encourages Neville, who has just been insulted by Draco Malfoy, by telling him, "You're worth twelve of Malfoy." This contributes to Neville's self-empowerment when, a while later, he himself stands up to Draco with the same words: "I'm worth twelve of you, Malfoy."[221] He has become an advocate for himself. Others who encourage Neville and play a role in his empowerment are Dumbledore and Remus Lupin.[222] Throughout the series, we see Neville become more and more empowered. He develops the courage to stand up to his own friends.[223] He works "relentlessly" to improve his performance in casting spells in Dumbledore's Army in order to become a more effective resister.[224] And finally, following Harry's instructions, Neville destroys the snake Nagini—the last remaining Horcrux—thus playing a key role in the final defeat of Voldemort. He does this with a brave and audacious taunt aimed at Voldemort and with the goal of honouring Harry Potter's legacy, whom he mistakenly believes is dead.[225]

The bleeding woman who comes to Jesus for healing (5:25–34) parallels Neville with regard to self-advocacy and self-empowerment. Like Neville, this woman is afraid and yet steps forward anyway (5:33). Interestingly, her intention was to draw power from Jesus' cloak (5:27–28), and yet it is her own initiative that empowers her to act. The initiative she takes is towards her own healing, in spite of severe suffering and difficult circumstances, and Jesus honours her faith and initiative (5:34).[226] Musa Dube, in a feminist, postcolonial retelling of this story where the bleeding woman embodies

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[221] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 160, 163.
[222] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 221; *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 100.
[223] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 198.
[224] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 488.
[225] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 695, 733.
[226] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 202–3.

Africa, describes her as someone who "fully participates in the search for healing and survival.[227] She is a self-advocate and thus an effective resister of the oppression she has experienced.

Another striking illustration of someone who advocates for herself, as well as others, is in the account of the Syrophoenician woman. In this story, the woman comes to Jesus with a request for him to heal her daughter (Mark 7:24–30). We find here an example of someone who successfully persisted and resisted. The fact that the composer of Mark includes this example of someone who resisted *Jesus himself* is quite telling. The identification of this woman as a Gentile has relevance for the account given by Mark. Most of Mark 7:24—8:38 transpires in Gentile areas. [228] The text explicitly states that this woman is "a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin" (7:26).

Whatever Jesus is doing in the Markan account of this story, he does not seem to be testing the woman's *faith*. According to Dowd, the woman's faith does not need to be tested. She has already demonstrated faith by coming to Jesus with the appeal that he heal her daughter.[229] Dowd provides some important contextual information which is helpful for understanding what might be happening in this scenario. First, it is interesting to note that, while first-century Jews seem to have kept their dogs outside, Gentiles often kept dogs *in* their houses.[230] If this was the case in the Gentile context,

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[227] Dube, "Fifty Years of Bleeding," 50; cf. 59–60.

[228] Beavis, *Mark*, 121.

[229] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 76. It is worth noting that, no matter what the interpretation, this is a difficult passage because what Jesus says to the woman in 7:27 appears to be an insult to her. However, a "test" is not ruled out altogether. Iverson points out the baffling circumstance that Jesus elsewhere is willing to heal Gentiles in Mark (3:7–12; 5:1–20). In light of this, a valid option for Jesus' response is that he is presenting the woman with some sort of "test" or "verbal challenge" (Iverson, "Jubilees and Mark" 120). Dowd refers to it as a "riddle" (Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 76).

[230] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 77. Cf. Tob 6:2; 11:4, where a dog travels with Tobias as a companion. Of this, Joshua Schwartz says the dog's role was "almost as a pet" (Schwartz, "Dogs in Jewish Society," 262). He maintains that, although there is evidence that dogs may have been pets for Jewish people in the

"the dogs under the table" in 7:28 would certainly make more sense. It is also useful to look at the words being used in this episode. The word that Jesus uses for children (τέκνα) can also mean "descendants," but the woman uses the word παιδία which means "little children." Also, Jesus uses the word κυνάρια which is a diminutive of "dogs" (in other words, "puppies") and the woman picks up on that word.[231] Through these two word choices she completely flips the context. She turns the table on Jesus. All of a sudden the puppies are inside romping under the table and they are no longer street curs. She also transforms the τέκνα (descendants who Dowd says are "jealously standing on their privileges") into little children without claim or position who are the only ones in the Gospel of Mark who will receive the kingdom (reign) of God (10:15).[232] As a result, instead of viewing the situation as one where the descendants should not be required to give their food to those dogs outside, the Syrophoenician woman describes it as a situation where the children at the table would be willing to share their food with their little pet dogs.[233] Jesus responds, "Good answer!" (7:29, CEB) and lets her know that her daughter is already healed. Her perseverance has paid off. She prevails over Jesus in the encounter and he concedes to her.[234]

Second Temple period, "it is improbable that dogs in Jewish society were the objects of the same degree of affection as they received in the Graeco-Roman world or the Persian world" (Schwartz, "Dogs in Jewish Society," 266). Therefore, there may well have been a difference between how pets were treated by Jews and Gentiles that the Syrophoenician woman was picking up on.

[231] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 77.

[232] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 78.

[233] Gundry instead sees the dogs being able to eat because of the children's messy eating which allows crumbs to fall. However, he agrees with the main point here: there is enough for both to eat without either going hungry (Gundry, *Mark*, 374–75).

[234] Gundry observes that the woman has turned "the dialogue into a duel of wits" (Gundry, *Mark*, 374). Iverson comments that she "demonstrates an insight that is unparalleled in the Gospel of Mark" (Iverson, "Jubilees and Mark," 121).

In terms of resistance, there are some important takeaways from this story. First is the perseverance of the woman. She is seemingly rebuffed and, *nevertheless*, she persists. Her resistance is empowered by persistence and insistence. This kind of persistence is key when working toward a cause of justice and endeavouring to stand with those who have been pushed to the fringes and excluded from the good things God intends for them.[235] Second, this is an act of advocacy—an important component of social justice action. The woman advocates for her herself and her daughter but, in the process, she ends up also advocating for her people—for "all the gentile underdogs" who do not have a place at the table.[236] Moreover, flipping the context and helping others to see things in new and imaginative ways is an essential task for effective resisters. In effect, the woman is empowering Jesus to see the situation in a new way. The Syrophoenician woman is therefore an effective model for self-advocacy and self-empowerment, as we have also seen in Neville Longbottom and the woman who came to Jesus for healing.

An important element in terms of this topic is that Jesus encourages people to be empowered. He himself empowers others but he also engages with them when they are advocating for themselves or others. This is the kind of person who the Harry Potter audience can also come to know as inspiring empowerment.

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[235] Gary Haugen, the founder of the International Justice Mission, defines injustice as "abusing power by taking from others the good things that God intended for them, namely their life, liberty, dignity, or the fruits of their love or labor" (Haugen, *Just Courage*, 46). I therefore define justice as ensuring that people have the good things that God intended for them.

[236] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 78.

Hidden in Plain Sight: Humour, Story, and Symbolic Resistance

Humour and story are effective forms of resistance. This is because they can be undertaken in a way that can occur in the public sphere, thus moving away from completely hidden transcripts. They often include some form "of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs rituals, codes, and euphemisms—a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups—fit this description."[237] In a similar way, I propose that some resistance can be carried out in a way that is symbolic. This type of resistance expresses a certain point or message through actions or object lessons, without directly stating something that might be interpreted as hostile or confrontational. Disguised messaging using stories, humour, or symbolic resistance frequently imagines and presents a "World Upside Down" where, "in the rich traditions of carnival," fools like the Shakespearean Falstaff can speak truth to power.[238] All of this kind of resistance is thus hidden in plain sight.

Humour is certainly an effective means of resistance in the Harry Potter narrative. Professor Lupin teaches his students that humour and community can resist and overcome a perceived enemy.[239] The Marauder's Map is also a humorous tool of resistance. It challenges those who try to suppress it in an amusing and subversive manner. It provides key information that facilitates rule-breaking and resistance for the sake of justice.[240]

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[237] Scott, *Domination*, 19.
[238] Scott, *Domination*, 167.
[239] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 101–2. Here their enemy comes as a shape-shifting Boggart who can take the form of one's greatest fear.
[240] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 142–46.

With Fred and George Weasley, humour and civil disobedience tend to go hand in hand. As the Harry Potter narrative progresses, the Weasley twins' "magical mischief" is used more and more to resist oppressive powers and is also increasingly accepted and even supported by others in the resistance movement who may have initially disparaged what they were doing.[241] Using their humour and pranking as their protest against how Hogwarts is being run under Umbridge, Fred and George produce "a bit of mayhem."[242] Later, they use humour to commit their final act of resistance at Hogwarts, creating a swamp in the school's halls—"Mischief Managed."[243] This "chaotic spectacle" is all the more successful because it is enacted in a much more public way than some of their other antics.[244]

Fred and George's humour-based resistance is actually quite well-planned, thorough, and effective. Essentially, what they do is create a popular culture legacy consisting of their joke products and tales of their resistance efforts that inspires and motivates other students to resist even after the two have left the school.[245] This shows the importance of narrative to the process. Stories can help to communicate and inform as well as to inspire resistance. During a dark and difficult time in the magic world, some people stare "transfixed" as they catch sight of the colourful and hilarious window display of Fred and George's joke shop. Others break out in laughter. They are all amazed at the contrast with everything around them.[246] The humour used in the display,

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[241] Bealer, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix," 182.

[242] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 552.

[243] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 593–95.

[244] Bealer, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix," 183. One could argue that Fred and George do not have much to lose since they are ready to leave the school anyway.

[245] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 596–97. In terms of hidden transcripts, this fits well with what James Scott says about things like "folktales songs, gestures, jokes, and theater of the powerless" and how they can be used as . . . a critique of power" (Scott, *Domination*, xiii; cf. 19).

[246] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 113.

as well as the products they are selling, sends a powerful message of encouragement and hope. This latter incident is an example of combining humour with symbolic resistance. It is done out in the open and uses a slightly disguised reference to Voldemort. In this way, there is no direct challenge made to Voldemort but he is undermined using humour.

Another good example of symbolic resistance is the "magical graffiti" on the memorial sign in Godric's Hollow, commemorating the incident where Lily and James Potter died at the hands of Voldemort and Harry survived. Messages such as "If you read this, Harry, we're all behind you" help to encourage Harry and thus to persist in the resistance movement without explicitly naming or challenging Voldemort.[247]

Humour, story, and symbolic resistance also play a role in how Jesus models resistance in the Gospel of Mark. Iverson argues that there is humour in the Gospel of Mark and, indeed, that Mark "was crafted for comedic effect."[248] Like George and Fred Weasley, Jesus uses humour and ridicule to resist those in authority who use their power to oppress others. At his arrest, Jesus undermines and even mocks the fact that those in authority come after him using excessive force rather than arresting him while he was in public—teaching in the temple area on a daily basis (Mark 14:43–49). This ridiculing by Jesus highlights their actions and shows them to be cowards. It is a much more cryptic and, indeed, wiser form of resistance to imply that the authorities were acting in a cowardly way by unmasking them with his words than to outright call them cowards. This perceptive and penetrating observation of what they are doing is therefore an

[247] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 333.

[248] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 5. This will especially come into play in examining the Mark 10:32–45 episode.

effective means of resistance. It reveals the truth that the emperor has no clothes and must therefore sneak around in order not to be exposed.[249] It is important to recognize, however, that when Jesus mocks others it is very different than when they mock him. He does not mock those who are vulnerable or marginalized but uses ridicule to stand up to those who have power.[250] The author of Mark also turns the ridiculing of Jesus by his adversaries back against them. "The mocking of Jesus on the cross by his opponents is . . . a classic example of verbal irony. What these characters call out to Jesus in derision, the audience knows to be true, and their mockery falls on their own heads."[251] They unknowingly end up mocking themselves.

Jesus' legacy of resistance is carried on by the stories that have been passed on about him, as well as the stories he told, including those recorded in the Gospel of Mark. Stories, in the first century and still today, engage their audiences and capture their attention. Jesus was known for telling parables; they were a part of his legacy. The parables of Jesus were a new way of looking at things. They were often used by him in debates with his opponents and had fitting, down-to-earth applications for specific situations rather than more general, "heavenly" purposes.[252] They were challenging and incisive. As such, they provided an effective means of resisting oppression, as in the case of the vineyard parable.

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[249] The naked man at the scene (14:51–52) may in fact be the Markan composer's way of revealing, in a symbolic way, that the authorities have been exposed and unmasked.

[250] The encounter with the Syrophoenician woman and the reference to dogs (Mark 7:27) may be an exception, but there is also evidence of a purpose other than insult or ridicule, as I have discussed above.

[251] Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 282.

[252] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 177. See also Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 116.

In the account of the Gerasene exorcism, Jesus enacts and Mark recounts an incident that I would argue is an example of symbolic resistance. There is evidence here of resistance to Roman colonial powers but it is not done in a manner that blatantly challenges the empire. The name of the pack of demons possessing and oppressing this man is "Legion" (5:9; Λεγιών), a term which would have brought to mind a company of Roman soldiers.[253] These Roman legions would also have been remembered as recently burning nearby villages and slaughtering multitudes of people.[254] It is therefore remarkable that Jesus, in effect, hurls the demonic "Legion" into the sea (5:13). It metaphorically serves to underscore the demonic nature of the Roman military Powers as illustrated in Mark.[255] This exorcism is consequently a divine pronouncement: it "declares God's judgment on Rome's imperial order." Jesus thus enacts the defeat—the downfall—of the Roman Empire.[256] This, in combination with the other exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark, signals "the decisive breach in the defenses of the symbolic fortress of Roman Palestine. The political and ideological authority of both the scribal establishment and the Roman military garrison—the two central elements within the colonial condominium—have been repudiated. The narrative space has been cleared for

[253] Bock sees a possible military sense in the word Legion but does not see this as an indictment of the Roman Empire. He definitively states that there is not "*any* political allegory about Rome present" (Bock, *Mark*, 191n209. Emphasis added). Yarbro Collins maintains that the main purpose of this episode is to convey how Jesus brought about healing and flourishing for the man rather than making a statement concerning the Roman Empire. However, she goes on to observe the following: "Just as, however, the heavenly armies of Daniel and Revelation are correlated with earthly events, so there may be a secondary political implication to the story of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark. It would be a culturally logical step for the audience to link the kingdom of Satan with Rome and the healing activity of Jesus with the restored kingdom of Israel" (Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 270; cf. Bird, "Testament of Solomon," 82). Therefore, whether it is the primary or a secondary objective of the story, resisting the empire seems to play a part. To be sure, I would say both of these aims work together to communicate a message of good news and hope in the midst of suffering and oppression.

[254] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 100.

[255] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 121.

[256] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 102.

the kingdom ministry to commence in full, both to Jew and to gentile."[257] Not only that, but the Gerasene man is healed; the night and day transformation is startling (5:15). He has gone from being oppressed by the empire's Legion to a place of well-being because of Jesus' defiance of that empire.

Another incident of symbolic resistance, an object lesson given by Jesus, occurs in Mark 12:13–17 where a group of Herodians and Pharisees attempt to trick Jesus. It is noteworthy that the question regarding the tribute occurs just after he tells the parable of the vineyard where they realize he has called them out.

They are attempting to trap him with this riddle about the coin, supposing that either answer will get him in trouble. However, he flips the coin on them. He highlights the hypocrisy of these leaders in a creative way. He shows them they are being idolatrous by keeping this image of the emperor in their pockets.[258] Therefore, when he instructs them "Give to the emperor" (12:17), he is actually telling them to return this image to the empire and take it out of Judea where it does not belong. It becomes "a disguised, dignity-restoring act of resistance that recognizes God's all-encompassing claim."[259] This imperial tribute was the oppressive and hated poll tax and therefore Jesus would not have instructed his listeners to simply pay it out of duty.[260] He has something more subversive in mind. They were to return the coin "to the blasphemer who had minted it without acknowledging Rome's claim to rule either their bodies or their

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[257] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 194.

[258] The inscription on the coin identified Caesar as the "August and Divine Son" (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 311). The coin was most likely a denarius in the second series of those with the image of Tiberius and the Latin inscription *CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS* (Hart, "Coin," 244, 248).

[259] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 29.

[260] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 311; cf. 312. There is historical evidence of resistance against Roman taxation. According to Josephus, Judas the Galilean had a significant following as he resisted against the tax (Josephus, *War* 2:117–118; *Ant*. 18:4–6). This was a tax levied through the census of Quirinius in 6 CE.

land."[261] William Herzog identifies this as "a coded message" which urges people to resist.[262] This cryptic response given by Jesus "is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning."[263] It is a subversive act hidden in plain sight that unmasks the Romans but also those who, by their actions, end up being complicit with the Romans. Jesus essentially gives an ambiguous answer that can be taken in different ways by the two groups who come to question him.[264] According to Samuel, what is needed is a strategic stance "that, on the one hand, is apparently affiliative and potentially disruptive to the imperial order and, on the other hand, is not supportive of a nationalistic agenda" while maintaining loyalty to Israel's God.[265] Evans proposes that what Jesus does is to cast the question back to the questioners with the objective that they "probe deeply into their own motives and loyalties."[266] This would, in turn, allow for a generous and hopeful reading of the Pharisees and Herodians who have come to Jesus. Jesus resists against them but in a way that opens the door for them to reflect for themselves with the hope that they see things in a new way. This would be something crucial for the Harry Potter audience to observe as well, as they opened up to new horizons and new ways of seeing things.

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[261] Herzog, "Onstage and Offstage," 59.

[262] Herzog, "Onstage and Offstage," 58. Some interpret what Jesus is saying as supporting compliance with the state, a concept that they hold is further developed in Rom 13:1–7 (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 372; Evans, *Mark*, 247–48; France, *Gospel According to Mark*, 466). Bock maintains that Jesus is advocating that the government be honoured (Bock, *Mark*, 306). However, there is no evidence for this. In terms of Rom 13, Stanley Porter challenges the view that it teaches "unqualified obedience to the state" by examining Paul's position on the emperor cult as well as several lexical matters (Porter, "Paul Confronts Caesar," 185, 164–96).

[263] Scott, *Domination*, 18–19.

[264] Evans, *Mark*, 247. The Pharisees and Herodians were probably not allies and would have envisioned very different correct answers to the question of whether one ought to pay taxes to Caesar: the Pharisees seeing it as idolatry and the Herodians holding that taxes were owed to the emperor (Evans, *Mark*, 244).

[265] Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 141.

[266] Evans, *Mark*, 248.

Like the Weasley brothers and other Harry Potter characters, Jesus left a legacy that would encourage others. In his case, of course, his life and example would have a much further reach. His whole life was an act of symbolic resistance, to the point of being willing to lay aside ultimate power in order to purposefully and courageously travel the path that would lead to his own death. In so doing he rejected the way of the Romans.

Civil Disobedience

One key approach to resisting oppression is to call for the reform and restructuring of corrupt systems—to, in effect, dismantle structures of oppression and reconfigure them so that they are just and inclusive. This can seem quite radical, like when Dumbledore tells Cornelius Fudge that the "most essential step is to remove Azkaban from the control of the Dementors." Fudge's response to this demand for prison and policing reform sounds eerily similar to responses given to comparable petitions in our world today: "Preposterous! . . . I'd be kicked out of office for suggesting it! Half of us only feel safe in our beds at night because we know Dementors are standing guard at Azkaban!"[267] Yet Dumbledore pushes further and makes a pronouncement on Fudge of what will happen if he pursues this inaction: "Fail to act—and history will remember you as the man who stepped aside, and allowed Voldemort a second chance to destroy the world we have tried to rebuild!"[268] This invariably comes to pass. Corrupt and tyrannical systems which have been constructed with deliberation and sustained effort

[267] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 614.
[268] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 615.

require a correspondingly deliberate and sustained response. As Bethany Barratt wisely observes: "[W]e can allow the weight of these inequities to crush us into despair or—like Harry—we can harden our resolve, and mine strength from anger. We can work to destroy the power structures (such as parts of the Ministry of Magic) that support injustice, oppression, and hatred, while working to foster the key components of justice in our society."[269] This resonates powerfully with what is happening in the Gospel of Mark, with Jesus at the forefront.

Civil disobedience and noncompliance are two important nonviolent strategies for resisting systemic oppression. Two of the most prominent examples of civil disobedience in the Harry Potter books are the Order of the Phoenix and the student group, Dumbledore's Army (DA). As subversive challenges to authorities that occur out of the line of sight of those same authorities, what they are doing and how they are doing it fall under the classification of hidden transcripts. The two movements conceive of creative ways to communicate with each other secretly.[270] They create diversions and disguises to protect their members, particularly Harry Potter.[271] The Order of the Phoenix is "a secret society" whose purpose is to fight Voldemort.[272] The hidden location of its headquarters at Grimmauld Place allows for the movement to mature; they are able to create a hidden transcript of resistance which is on its way to being "cooked" because it is becoming richer and well-developed.[273] The DA also manages to

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[269] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 57.
[270] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 352, 577, 579–81.
[271] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 54, 137, 236–40.
[272] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 65.
[273] Scott, *Domination*, 216; cf. Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 57–58. This development is a process and one thing still missing for it to be considered fully cooked is for it to be more public, as happens later in the Battle of Hogwarts.

find a secret meeting location which helps them develop as a movement. They take the initiative to equip themselves; in Hermione's words, they "took matters into [their] own hands."[274] In order to establish and run the DA, they break several rules including the decree enacted to prevent groups of students from meeting without authorization.[275] However, they do this not just for the sake of rule-breaking but with a clear purpose in mind, to prepare to resist Voldemort and defend themselves against him.[276] Harry's work in the DA helps to equip him and the other students as leaders and effective resisters so that others, in turn, can "follow [their] example of civil disobedience."[277] Indeed, the work of the Order of the Phoenix and the DA continue on after Umbridge apparently disbands the DA. Ginny, Luna, and Neville take on the mission of the DA after Harry has left the school[278] and the magical radio program Potterwatch provides a clandestine communication system to fuel the movement against Voldemort.[279]

In his engagement with the temple in Jerusalem, which primarily takes place toward the end of the Gospel, Jesus' resistance becomes much bolder and more open. For readers of the Harry Potter series, this would be reminiscent of how the resistance of Harry, the Order of the Phoenix, and the DA becomes bolder and more public when confronting Voldemort and his followers at the Battle of Hogwarts at the end of the last book. Jesus' resistance in Jerusalem tends to take the form of publicly confronting and challenging the authorities. This bold resistance ultimately leads to his execution.[280]

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[274] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 303, 345–47. See also Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 577.
[275] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 313–15.
[276] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 296.
[277] Reschan, "Bridge to Dystopia," 127–29. Reschan includes young readers of the Harry Potter series as those who might model themselves after Harry's example.
[278] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 575.
[279] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 438–44.
[280] Carter, *Roman Empire*, 22.

Jesus' and Mark's defiance of the temple and the unjust practices associated with it are found in the so-called temple cleansing, the vineyard parable, the denunciation of the scribes, and the prediction of the temple's destruction.

Jesus' demonstration in the temple in Mark 11:15–19 is an important example of how to resist against injustice and oppression using civil disobedience. In this episode, Jesus is responding to the fact that the temple leaders are taking advantage of the people—abusing their authority for their own gain. From the words "for all nations" (11:17), the implication is that those whom the temple is intended to include are being excluded, particularly the Gentiles. Jesus words "you have made it a den of robbers" is a quotation of Jer 7:11. An examination of the context in Jer 7:1–15 presents a severe condemnation of the temple for oppression of vulnerable people and immorality.[281] What prompts Jesus' demonstration on this occasion is not spelled out here.[282] The most telling evidence of the provocative nature of the actions, and particularly the teachings, of Jesus here is in the reactions of the chief priests and scribes. In response to what he said, "they kept looking for a way to kill him (11:18). Evans notes that "Jesus' allusions to Isaiah and Jeremiah would have been as provocative and offensive in the minds of the

[281] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 303; Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 92. Yarbro Collins sees Jesus' actions, rather, as a condemnation of an intrusion on the sacredness of the temple and its courts (Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 530).

[282] Evans, *Mark*, 164. Essentially, there seem to be multiple factors at play. It has been suggested that Jesus drives out those who were trading in the temple, not because they were buying and selling, but because the poor were being exploited (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 299). Timothy Gray puts forward that it is not the buyers and sellers who are the focus of Jesus' protest, but the temple authorities who allowed these exchanges which contributed to "the fleecing of the people" (Gray, *Temple in the Gospel*, 28). Myers also proposes that the phrase "he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple" in 11:16 implies that Jesus was putting a stop to all cultic operations in the temple as well (Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 301). Gray observes the following: "By stopping the flow of traffic and transport within the temple, Jesus brought the temple to a virtual standstill . . . The purpose was for a prophetic sign. The shutting down of the temple cult, albeit temporarily, signified that soon the temple would be permanently silenced" (Gray, *Temple in the Gospel*, 30). Evans, on the other hand, points out that the demonstration would have only affected a limited area and not enough to "bring temple traffic to a standstill" (Evans, *Mark*, 167).

ruling priests as the actions themselves."[283] They would therefore have seen all of this as an act of defiance by Jesus.[284] Jesus' actions here are therefore a clear and forceful show of resistance. They are bold and public declarations of Jesus' assessment of the temple and what is happening under its watch.

In Mark 12:1–12, Jesus uses a parable to communicate his intended message. The vineyard parable is a strong condemnation against the temple leaders as indicated by the fact that "they realized that he had told the parable against them" (12:2).[285] By using a parable, Jesus is still veiling his communication; however, it is "a thinly veiled allusion" to the corruption and greed of these religious leaders. The clear parallels to the other vineyard parable in Isa 5:1–10 and its judgment of Israel reinforce this reproving message.[286] Towards the end of the parable is a powerful warning: "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others" (12:9). To the "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders" (11:27) hearing these words, they would have meant that "[t]heir place of power and prestige will soon come to an end. Their positions will be given to others."[287]

Jesus conveys his opposition to the temple in a variety of ways in Chapters 11 and 12 of the Gospel. As he then leaves the temple, he foretells of its devastation to the

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[283] Evans, *Mark*, 166.

[284] Josephus reports that it was at the suggestion of the priests that Jesus was condemned (Josephus, *Ant*. 18:64). In *Ant*. 11:140–41 Josephus identifies the "principal men" he refers to in 18:64 as "the priests and Levites." Referring to these texts in Josephus, Evans asks, "Why would Jerusalem's ruling priests hand over Jesus to the Roman governor? The most probable answer is that he had said and done things within the temple precincts (the ruling priests' domain of authority) that they found offensive and dangerous" (Evans, *Mark*, 167).

[285] Hooker observes that "these men have consistently refused to hear God's word and do so still in their refusal to listen to Jesus" (Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 274).

[286] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 309. "In the Gospel of Mark there is no judgment upon Israel as there is in Isaiah; rather, the judgment falls on the temple leadership whom Jesus has already condemned for not including the gentiles in God's house of prayer" (Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 129).

[287] Evans, *Mark*, 237.

point where "[n]ot one stone will be left here upon another" (13:2).[288] This is the culmination of his resistance against the temple.[289] His defiance has become more "cooked" and well-developed, as well as increasingly taking place in the public sphere. With this pronouncement of the temple's fate, however, he does not leave his followers without hope. He goes on to preach a sermon facing the temple in 13:3–37 which "offers a vision of the end of the temple-based world, and the dawn of a new one in which the powers of domination have been toppled."[290]

Jesus' resistance to the temple through his words and actions in Mark 11–13 is thorough and consummate. Throughout, his concern for those who have been oppressed by the temple system has been paramount. He has therefore been an effective advocate on their behalf. Indeed, it is unlikely that Jesus would have had the influence on history that he did and lived on in the memories of people for two millennia without a public declaration of resistance to the temple institutions and corrupt authorities, for which he was executed by the Romans.[291] Like the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army, Jesus has moved toward a more public display of his opposition, working for the destruction of any power structures that maintain oppression and injustice.

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[288] Bock notes that there are similar warnings of the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible (Bock, *Mark*, 321. See Jer 7:14; 26:6; Mic 3:12).

[289] The statement would have been quite "startling" for the disciples, although they were aware "of Jesus' criticism of the priestly establishment" (Evans, *Mark*, 299).

[290] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 323.

[291] Horsley, "Politics of Disguise," 73. Horsley goes on to note that because Jesus' resistant acts "took place in the public space of the city, they did have a public impact, which is why the Jerusalem rulers needed to crack down and the Roman governor needed to make an example of him" (Horsley, "Politics of Disguise," 75).

Speaking Truth to Power

An important part of resisting systemic oppression is to use one's voice, particularly to speak truth to power. Speaking out to those in power usually has consequences. Dumbledore loses his position as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot for a full year for speaking out to the Minister about Voldemort.[292] It can be an act of courage to speak out on behalf of someone when there is a power differential. Parvati Patil bravely uses her voice to defend Neville to Draco Malfoy who is abusing power by being a bully. Later she speaks out in defense of Harry to Professor McGonagall, a person in authority.[293] Harry speaks truth to power with Rufus Scrimgeour, the Minister of Magic. Twice Harry challenges Scrimgeour to his face.[294] On another occasion, Hermione speaks out to Professor Umbridge. What is notable about this situation is Hermione's persistence and the fact that others—Harry, Ron, Dean, and Parvati—are motivated to join with her in resisting Umbridge with the result that they are successful in at least getting her attention: "Professor Umbridge seemed to decide that she could ignore the situation no longer."[295]

Jesus also uses his voice to speak truth to power. One situation where he uses his voice to call out those who are exploiting the vulnerable is in Mark 12:38–42. Interestingly, the context of admonishing the scribes in the first part of this passage is frequently not brought fully into the interpretation of the second half which details

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[292] Liedl, "Magic Is Might,"158; Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 615.

[293] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 111.

[294] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 324–26; 604–5. Later, he and Hermione talk back to Scrimgeour at the reading of Dumbledore's will (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 123–24, 127, 129).

[295] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 217. Notably, it is also Hermione who offers a serious challenge to Umbridge and helps Harry to escape her control near the end of *Order of the Phoenix* (Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 201). Neville also stands up to a teacher, Alecto Carrow (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 574). Both Umbridge and Carrow are known for bullying and terrorizing students, so standing up to them requires enormous courage.

Jesus' observations of a widow giving all she had.[296] This leads to the omission of an important element when interpreting this account—an element which has the potential to say something significant about opposing and lamenting exploitation. Addison Wright has brought forward illuminating evidence to provide a different perspective on what Jesus had in mind by pointing out the actions of the widow.[297] The three most compelling arguments he makes for his interpretation are: the parallels with the Corban episode, the context immediately before the incident with the widow, and the context immediately afterwards.

One of the main problems that Wright has with the common interpretations of this episode, which take Jesus to be commending the widow's actions, is their apparent inconsistency with what he says about the Corban practice in Mark 7:9–13. Wright suggests that this earlier incident is "a perfect parallel" to the one in Mark 12 and that Jesus' offense at the abuse the practice promoted would indicate a similar offense at the abuse brought about in inducing people in desperate poverty to give away everything.[298]

There is important contextual information even closer at hand. The description of the scribes in 12:38–40 is an immediate prelude to the story of the widow and her coins in 12:41–44. "They devour widows' houses" (12:40) therefore holds the key to showing what is actually being done to vulnerable widows. Wright perceptively asks, "If, indeed,

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[296] The term γραμματέων, rendered "scribes" in the NRSV, is translated "legal experts" in the CEB and "teachers of the law" in the NIV.

[297] More traditional views understand that Jesus is commending the widow for her outstanding act of generosity and trust in God's providence. For example, Cranfield maintains that "the widow's gift, though tiny, meant a real surrender of herself to God and trust in him, and therefore an honouring of God *as God,* as the one to whom we belong wholly and who is able to care for us" (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark,* 387. Emphasis in original).

[298] Wright, "The Widow's Mites," 261; cf. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man,* 222. Derrett asserts: "Jesus was right. The vow, impeding a claim by a dependant parent, rendered ineffective, nullified *pro tanto,* the biblical obligation to maintain" (Derrett, "KOPBAN," 367).

Jesus is opposed to the devouring of widows' houses, how could he possibly be pleased with what he sees here?"[299] In this situation, by giving their very last penny, those already in poverty are left completely destitute.[300] The appropriate response to such circumstances is to lament them as a tragic event and that is what Wright contends Jesus is doing here.[301]

Jesus therefore uses both his condemnation of the scribes and his lament for the widow as forms of resistance. Moreover, Mark's framing of Jesus' words surrounding this incident is in itself a form of resistance. "Mark unsparingly caricatures the scribe as one who at every stage of social life wishes to be endowed with special privilege and status—the most important commodities in the attainment of social power in Mediterranean honor culture. These attitudes are of course antithetical to Jesus' instructions to his own community concerning being 'last' and 'servant.' "[302] Thus, Jesus' strong statement of resistance here serves to both unmask and engage the scribes and their selfish posturing. The unmasking and engaging continues as he goes on to highlight, in both his condemnation of their devouring habits and in his words about the widow, how they prey on the vulnerable and marginalized in society.

According to Wright, there is further contextual evidence. Immediately after this incident in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus makes the pronouncement that the temple will be completely destroyed and not even one stone left on another (Mark 13:2). This makes the situation even more tragic. The widow was being influenced by the religious authorities to give up what she in fact needed to survive and the ironic result was that

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[299] Wright, "The Widow's Mites," 262.
[300] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 111.
[301] Wright, "The Widow's Mites," 262.
[302] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 320.

support of the temple would come to naught when it was destroyed.[303] Overall, Wright makes a potent case for reading this episode in a new light.[304] The preceding verse holds the interpretive key.[305] Ironically, still today this episode is used to exploit the very people it is meant to protect from these types of predators.[306] This story, taken in its literary context, would be put to much better use as a lament and protest in response to exploitation—as I would suggest is the apparent purpose of Jesus' words.

Speaking truth to power is something that is valued in the Harry Potter stories and also by those who follow the stories. It is a practice enacted by both Harry and Jesus.

Conclusion

In practices of civil disobedience and speaking truth to power, both Harry and Jesus oppose the power structures that exploit and oppress the vulnerable. They both take a stand against the corrupt Domination System that threatens the way of life they value and work hard to dismantle that system. In both cases, this way of life offers a reimagining of how things are done that is not founded on oppression and injustice. This

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[303] Wright, "The Widow's Mites," 263. See also Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 216; Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 322.

[304] Others differ, taking a more traditional position. Hooker holds that Jesus is commending the woman: "Jesus praises the woman for giving all that she has—though an infinitesimal amount" (Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 296). Responding to Wright, Robert Gundry, while agreeing that the account of the widow "is not paranetic" and recognizing that she has given "all of [her] subsistence," still concludes that Jesus' perspective on what he describes is "no more lamentable than commendatory" (Gundry, *Mark*, 730–31).

[305] Not only that, but many versions (including the NRSV, CEB, and NIV) all have a new heading before v. 41 highlighting the story of the widow but detaching it from the prelude and its strong warning to beware of the very ones exploiting the widows.

[306] Today they take the form of televangelists, proponents of the prosperity gospel, and even well-intentioned church leaders who think they are doing the right thing by encouraging impoverished people to give "their all."

reimagining is closely associated with Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of *ekklēsia*. A key component of *ekklēsia* is reforming corrupt systems and institutions. It is a "decolonizing space" that challenges the dominating and oppressive powers of empire.[307] It critiques, refuses, and works to overturn the status quo.[308] However, the purpose of the *ekklēsia* is not only to challenge and dismantle such corrupt systems but to also create something new. The *ekklēsia* is transformative.[309] What has been deconstructed is reconstructed in a radically new way. Both "the past and the present are critically reconceived in the service of a transformative and hopeful vision" for the future.[310] This reimagined world is a place where there is equality and agency for all, as well as the full inclusion of those who have been marginalized.[311] It is a supportive community where justice and flourishing are sought after for everyone.[312] This kind of community built on justice and hope, as well as the resistance that fights for them, is likely to appeal to those in the Harry Potter community of readers. Teachers or reading guides can help walk these readers through a reading strategy that highlights this.

Throughout this process of juxtaposing the Harry Potter text with the Markan text, an image of Jesus has begun to appear. It is an image of a resister, one who stands against oppression and works to include those who have been excluded and pushed to the margins. It is an image of a resister who challenges the Domination System and seeks to invert it and then reimagine a new way of doing community. The emergence of this image has been heightened by viewing the Gospel of Mark through the lens of

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[307] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 129.
[308] Castelli, "Ekklēsia of Women," 38, 45.
[309] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 73.
[310] Castelli, "Ekklēsia of Women," 36–37.
[311] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 10.
[312] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 280n79.

Harry Potter, both the character and the body of literature. I believe this endeavour can be of value for those who are reading the Gospels and other biblical texts with popular or other cultural works as lenses. In the next chapter, I will investigate how this process of using the Harry Potter lens to juxtapose the two texts can be instrumental in discovering important insights from Mark 10:32–45 specifically and thereby continue to open up new horizons for the Harry Potter audience.

CHAPTER 4: READING MARK 10:32–45 THROUGH THE LENS OF HARRY POTTER

A key objective for this study is to explore how the Bible can be made more accessible and relevant for today's reader. My thesis proposes that popular culture is one way to help bridge this gap. In this chapter, I intend to examine one biblical episode (Mark 10:32–45) through the lens of popular culture literature, namely the Harry Potter series of books. A primary objective is to test this process to see what can be discovered from such an investigation. If it proves instructive, such an endeavour would also be helpful for others to read the Bible through the lens of Harry Potter or, indeed, other works of the arts and popular culture. In this chapter, I will explore the following items by using the reading lens to juxtapose the Harry Potter text with the Mark 10:32–45 text: journey; the passion prediction and *via crucis*; James and John's request to Jesus; Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:42–45.

Journey

Journey is a common motif in the Gospel of Mark.[1] There are several places in Mark that refer to going on a journey, a road, or a way: Mark 1:2–3; 6:8; 8:3, 27; 9:33–34; 10:17, 32, 46, 52; 11:8; 13:34.[2] The episode I am concerned with in Mark 10 is part of

[1] A motif is a repetitive literary device consisting of a recurring image or entity occurring throughout a narrative (Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120).

[2] There is also Mark 15:41 which talks about the women who travelled to Jerusalem with Jesus.

the middle section of the Gospel (8:22–10:52). The Markan storyteller envisaged this segment in particular as a journey.[3] Moreover, each of the three passion predictions is associated with a different geographic location (Caesarea Philippi, passing through Galilee, and heading toward Jerusalem)[4] incorporating them into the journey motif.[5]

Journey is also a prominent motif in the last book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Harry is on a journey with his friends Hermione and Ron for most of the book.[6] This quest is a process of learning and growth for them, at times quite transformational.[7] Learning is also central to the journey in the Gospel of Mark as Jesus teaches his disciples some important principles for life and faith. Myers appropriately refers to this travelling teaching mission as "a school of the road."[8]

Both Harry and Jesus have a reason for their journey. Harry's mission is to defeat Voldemort and to destroy the Horcruxes in order to accomplish that objective. He is even willing to give up his last year at Hogwarts, the school he loves, in order to pursue that goal.[9] Harry, Hermione, and Ron know the danger involved in this endeavour and yet are committed to undertake it.[10] Likewise, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem knowing what would happen to him there. There is evidence in the third

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[3] Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, 44.

[4] Mark 8:27; 9:30; 10:32 respectively.

[5] Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, 45. However, Halvor Moxnes proposes that the "landscape" of the journey in the Gospels has more to do with Jesus and his teaching than the physical geography (Moxnes, "Landscape and Spatiality," 94, 99).

[6] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 160–576.

[7] For example, a repentant Ron saves Harry's life, faces his deepest fears as he destroys one of the Horcruxes, and has a new attitude toward the other two (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 370–87). Another example relevant to the concept of transformative journey is King's Cross station which, in both the first and last books, serves as a transitional space for Harry's "journey into a new life" (Behr, "Philosopher's Stone," 269).

[8] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 285.

[9] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 606.

[10] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 99.

passion prediction (Mark 10:33–34) that Jesus knew he was going to die there.[11] However, I propose that another reason for going to Jerusalem was to challenge the temple system there.[12] In any case, he was focused and determined to pursue this mission, as Harry was. For both Jesus and Harry it is a character defining journey.[13] It is difficult and exacts much from them. Both end up being prepared to sacrifice their lives.

The form the journey takes also lends itself to hidden transcripts of resistance. It allows for some anonymity and "provide[s] both a structure and a cover for resistance."[14] Furthermore, much of the teaching by Jesus on the way to Jerusalem involves taking the smaller group of "the twelve" aside and teaching them more privately (9:35–36; 10:32, 41–42). The journey in the Harry Potter story is also a key part of the resistance. It allows Harry and his friends to stay hidden for significant lengths of time but then to make strikes of resistance when expedient.

All of this can be helpful for readers who use Harry Potter as a lens for the Gospel of Mark. This lens can help readers to pick up on things they might otherwise miss, because they are shown to be relevant to those same readers. Themes like learning and transformation, persistence, resistance, and sacrifice show up in the journey motif and resonate with the Markan audience, both because they have been encountered in the Harry Potter literature and because they resonate with questions faced in their own lives. The journey motif in itself can be meaningful in a personal way. There is the potential for readers to view as a journey the transformative process they are engaged in with the

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[11] Concerning Mark 10:32, France notes that the Jerusalem "destination is now explicitly spelled out for the first time" (France, *Gospel of Mark*, 411).

[12] See especially Mark 11:15–13:2 and my discussion of several of these incidents in the previous chapter.

[13] Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 30–31.

[14] Scott, *Domination*, 200.

text. The journey motif is therefore a useful way of framing the material in the Harry Potter novels to highlight similar themes in the Gospel of Mark. It is a means of resonating with the Harry Potter audience.

The Passion Prediction and the *Via Crucis*

The passion prediction of 10:32–34 is of critical importance for understanding the rest of the episode. It provides the context and motivation for Jesus' teaching. It is therefore useful to include it with the text I will be examining. It shows that Jesus is, indeed, willing to sacrifice his own life, to give himself for others, and to put their needs (their ransom and liberation) ahead of his own.

The content of the third prediction includes Jesus' description of his forthcoming suffering, death, and resurrection. "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again" (Mark 10:33–34). The third passion prediction builds on two previous ones (Mark 8:31; 9:31). They are piled on each other so that the third one is a culmination of the other two, providing the most detailed information.[15] Their common context, each associated with a teaching of Jesus, and the repetition of the subject matter identify the passion predictions as a series of three episodes. The repetition works rhetorically to emphasize the words of Jesus, but also to emphasize the response of the disciples and the teachings of Jesus connected with each of the predictions. Readers of Harry Potter who come to the Gospel

[15] Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 157–58; Culpepper, *Mark*, 342.

text will already be familiar with series of three in the books, such as the three challenges in the Triwizard Tournament[16] and the three Deathly Hallows in the "The Tale of the Three Brothers."[17] There would also be resonance with the conversations Harry has with Dumbledore near the end of each of the books. Each of these conversations provides Harry more information than the previous one, thus building on each other.

In the words of the prediction, Jesus foretells his torture and humiliation by the Gentile authorities (10:34). Readers of Harry Potter are aware that he also has been degraded and taken for granted by Voldemort and his followers but then later revealed to be the one who vanquishes Voldemort as the true Master of the Elder Wand. In the same way, Jesus is dishonoured and taken for granted by Rome and its lackeys. The irony in the passion prediction is that what is predicted is, in reality, being done to the one who is the Son of Man. The one whom God elevates to an honoured position (Mark 14:62) is degraded by humans.[18] This has a hint of future symbolic inversion since the one considered lowly and degraded is the one who will later be exalted. What Jesus does by identifying them as his persecutors is to unmask the empire. Similarly, Harry unmasks Voldemort in his last battle with him.[19]

Another purpose of the passion predictions is for Jesus to reveal his awareness of his own death. He mentions he will be killed in each one, but in the last one he informs his followers that this will be done at the hand of the Gentiles. None of the predictions

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[16] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*.
[17] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 405–9.
[18] Bock, *Mark*, 278.
[19] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 737–44. Harry tells Voldemort he can no longer hide behind the Horcruxes.

mention crucifixion. However, this would certainly be implied by the fact that the execution would be carried out by the Gentiles. Since Jesus knew "what was to happen to him" (10:32) and went forward with his eyes wide open, this is further evidence of his willingness to face his own death and to follow his *via crucis*.

For both Jesus and Harry, the attitude of self-sacrifice is closely related to their *via crucis*, their journey to death. In the Harry Potter books, as elsewhere, sacrifice is closely related to love. Just like the love that energizes it, sacrifice is powerful. Dumbledore draws attention to "the precise and terrible power of . . . sacrifice."[20] Sacrifice involves the willingness to suffer and to risk or give one's life for others or for a cause. Another characteristic of sacrifice is that it most often takes courage.[21] In the Harry Potter story, sacrifice is often symbolized by blood.[22] This is an appropriate symbol because the ultimate sacrifice involves giving up one's very lifeblood and because the shedding of blood is often connected with suffering and death. Jesus is also willing to shed his blood, as indicated in his words at the last supper: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."[23] The courage of Jesus is seen in his determination to follow down a path he knows will lead to his death.

Harry Potter is the epitome of sacrifice in the books.[24] He sacrifices with respect to the things he is willing to give up and also the things he is willing to do in order to

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[20] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 710.

[21] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 606–7.

[22] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 604; *Half-Blood Prince*, 737; *Deathly Hallows*, 709. See also Granger, *Looking for God*, 72.

[23] Regarding "for many," cf. Mark 10:45.

[24] Several characters, other than Harry, make significant sacrifices throughout the narrative. Sirius Black believes wholeheartedly that "there are things worth dying for!" (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 421; cf. *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 275). His actions later underscore his commitment to this belief when he sacrifices his life in the aid of others (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 712). Ron dives into a frigid pool to save Harry and then faces his demons in order to destroy the locket Horcrux. He shows tremendous courage and a willingness to suffer for the cause (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 369, 374–77).

resist Voldemort and bring about his undoing. He, in partnership with Hermione and Ron, freely gives up almost a year of his youth in order to go on the quest for Horcruxes.[25] In the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, Harry helps to rescue others even though it puts his own position in the tournament in jeopardy. He lays aside his own needs and desires for others.[26]

More than all of this, the core of Harry's sacrificial nature is his readiness to die. He is already willing to die in the first book if it means resisting Voldemort and his evil influence: "It's only dying a bit later than I would have done, because I'm never going over to the Dark Side!"[27] The clearest depiction of Harry's readiness to die is seen in the description of his journey to his impending death—in essence, his *via crucis*. He is aware of his impending death and approaches it willingly.[28]

> A swarm of dementors was gliding amongst the trees; he could feel their chill, and he was not sure he would be able to pass safely through it. He had no strength left for a Patronus. He could no longer control his own trembling. It was not, after all, so easy to die. Every second he breathed, the smell of the grass, the cool air on his face, was so precious: To think that people had years and years, time to waste, so much time it dragged, and he was clinging to each second. At the same time he thought that he would not be able to go on, and knew that he must. The long game was ended, the Snitch had been caught, it was time to leave the air . . . He pressed the golden metal to his lips and whispered, "I am about to die."[29]

When Sirius's brother Regulus decides he does not want to be a Death Eater anymore, he goes so far as to sabotage Voldemort's plans and loses his life in the process. He "died to bring Voldemort down" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 198; cf. 186, 196). George Weasley loses an ear and Mad-Eye Moody loses his life in order to bring Harry to safety at the beginning of *Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 69, 78). After listening to the Potterwatch program, Hermione recognizes the enormous risk that other courageous resisters are taking (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 444). Lee Jordan had referred to them as "those friends of Harry Potter's who are suffering for their allegiance" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 441). Lily Potter is willing to suffer and die to save her son Harry (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 233; *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 140, 159). When Voldemort comes after Harry, Lily puts herself between them "as if in shielding him from sight she hoped to be chosen instead" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 344).

[25] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 18.
[26] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 433–37.
[27] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 197.
[28] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 708.
[29] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 697−98.

This decisive action is not taken lightly. Harry realizes what he is giving up and it causes him great anguish and suffering. This makes his chosen path all the more meaningful. Harry's sacrifice—his willingness to die born out of love for others—is what makes "all the difference" in bringing down Voldemort.[30]

Now note how the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, later in the Gospel of Mark, resonates with Harry's *via crucis* experience:

> They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." (14:32−36)

Both Harry and Jesus realize it will be difficult to die. Both wrestle with the idea of dying and have a strong reluctance to die. Both, however, come to fully accept their approaching deaths. Like Harry, who willingly followed the path to death in order to resist and defeat Voldemort, Jesus' journey to the cross is in itself a form of` resistance. It is quite likely the most profound manifestation of resistance we find in Mark's story, "the ultimate expression of nonviolent resistance."[31] Jesus displays courage and conviction in accepting this path, knowing what it will entail. We see in the three passion predictions that he is aware of what will happen to him. His willingness to follow the *via crucis* is seen in his words, "not what I want, but what you want" (14:36). And he follows through on his commitment, all the way to the cross. This is also a model for his disciples who are encouraged to "take up their cross" in order to follow

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[30] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 708.
[31] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, xxxii.

him (8:34).[32] Wink describes the connection between resistance and following the way of the cross as follows: "Taking up one's cross refers specifically to Rome's instrument of intimidation and execution. It reminds us again that following Jesus' liberating way puts us on a collision course with oppressive regimes and institutions, which will resort to any means necessary to crush resistance. By voluntarily and deliberately facing the prospect of death, one is freed from its power as a deterrent."[33]

By using the Harry Potter literature as a lens, readers can highlight certain features associated with the passion predictions, including repetition, irony, sacrifice, and *via crucis*. This can help to bring out the richness of the biblical text and make it more meaningful for the reader.

James and John's Request

Harry Potter's last conversation with Voldemort is filled with dramatic irony. Harry makes comments like: "You should have realized"; "I've seen what you'll be otherwise"; "Aren't you listening?"; and, most telling, "You still don't get it, Riddle, do you?" and Voldemort still refuses to believe.[34] His obsession with power makes him wilfully ignorant. Harry, on the other hand recognizes what is going on. He is identifying the dramatic irony while it is happening by informing Voldemort of his lack of awareness. The repetition of Harry's appeal to Voldemort to wake up and recognize what is happening underscores the message. Harry is also unmasking Voldemort by showing him to be foolish and ridiculous, as well as obsessed with power. All of this is

[32] This is from the teaching associated with the first passion prediction.
[33] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 163.
[34] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 740–42. See Jesus' words to the disciples in Mark 8:21: "Do you not yet understand?"

comparable to the way in which Jesus interacts with James and John when they come to him with an unusual request.

Repetition is used rhetorically for emphasis in Mark 10:35–40. There is a profusion of *Leitwörter* in this the account of James and John coming to Jesus. These are words with significant recurrence in the text. One needs only a cursory glance to begin to notice the number of words that are repeated in either the same form or in a related form. *Leitwörter* like "drink," "baptize," "right," and "left" are particularly noticeable in their repetition. There are numerous instances where Jesus either repeats back what the brothers have said or repeats what he himself has already said. He draws attention to their words but puts a twist on them to show they do not understand: "You do not know what you are asking" (10:38). This serves to emphasize their words. In a way, he seems to be throwing them back to James and John. Only once do the brothers repeat back to Jesus what he has said: "We are able" (10:39). In response, Jesus does not outright say that they do not know what they are saying as he did in 10:38 but in 10:39−40 he implicitly shows them that they still do not know what they are asking for. I would also propose that the one key phrase spoken by James and John that is not repeated by Jesus ("in your glory" [10:37]) is significant. This was something that was clearly important to James and John but it is left out by Jesus. There is a great deal going on in these few verses. Most of it is brought out in the back-and-forth dialogue between the brothers and Jesus, but especially from Jesus' words; his emphasis is brought out by the words he repeats. The repetition in the dialogue also helps to bring out the irony and humour in the situation. Moreover, this passage is a repeated type-scene parallel to the one in Mark

9:33–34 where the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest. This recurrence helps underscore the theme of grasping for power and status in the narrative.

James and John are the epitome of those who do not understand in Mark 10:35–40. This is significant since they are part of a group of twelve who are often recognized as just not getting it.[35] Despite Jesus having explained it to them three times, they are completely in the dark about what will happen at his passion. It is notable that James and John, along with Peter, have been two of Jesus' closest followers throughout the Gospel.[36] There is irony here in that those who would most be expected to be enlightened are decidedly not so. There is also irony in comparing the shortage of insight of the two brothers to the insight of the two men who are blind that Jesus heals (8:22–26; 10:46–52).[37] This is especially true of the healing of Bartimaeus, which comes immediately after 10:32–45, since Jesus' question to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" (10:51), is parallel to the one he asks James and John in 10:36: "What is it you want me to do for you?"[38] These individuals therefore act as foils for the disciples.

In the Harry Potter novels, those who do not understand are frequently the ones who have or pursue power. It is often associated with arrogance and a stubborn refusal to change one's mind. An example is Cornelius Fudge refusing to believe, even when

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[35] Justin Comber refers to them as "a dozen buffoons" (Comber, "Torn Between Two Kingdoms," 171). The twelve show a "lack of insight" throughout the Gospel (Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 151; cf. 151n24).

[36] Jesus personally calls them (Mark 1:19–20). The three of them are the only ones permitted to go with Jesus to heal Jairus's daughter (5:37). James, John, and Peter witness the profound moment of Jesus' transfiguration (9:2). Later, the three will also go with Jesus to Gethsemane (14:33).

[37] Numerous scholars have noticed the contrast between these men who are blind and Jesus' disciples, often specifying James and John. These include: Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, 44; Culpepper, *Mark*, 353; Dowd, *Reading Mark,* 115−16; Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 198, 252; Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 282; Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 10, 48; Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 151; Beavis, *Mark*, 159; Comber, "Torn Between Two Kingdoms," 151–53.

[38] Τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω and Τί θέλετε ποιήσω ὑμῖν, respectively.

given evidence, that Voldemort had returned.[39] Harry points out that Voldemort is still not getting it even though he has revealed a great deal of critical information to him.[40]

The lack of understanding by James and John leads to their, to say the least, inappropriate request of Jesus: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you" (10:35) followed up by "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (10:37). Their audacity in light of what Jesus has just told them is astonishing. Dowd rightly identifies this as a "boorish *non sequitur*."[41] This non sequitur by James and John is so provocative because, by definition, it comes immediately after the prediction by Jesus of his passion. He has shown that he is willing to proceed along a path that will lead to mocking, torture, and a humiliating execution. Yet what they want is glory for themselves.[42] The humour in the situation is quite apparent.[43] Gundry states that it is "unintendedly humorous in its request for a signed blank check."[44] However, rather than focusing on the humour here as unintended, I share the stance for this incident that Iverson holds for 8:14–21—that there is evidence of a "comedic interlude" with a crucial place in the episode.[45] Whether or not this was intentional, there is a

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[39] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 613.

[40] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 742.

[41] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 110. *Non sequitur*s can be either thematic or related to logical fallacies in argument (Young, *Studying English Literature*, 113). In a thematic *non sequitur*, there is paradoxically a disconnect between one theme and another that it is associated with—essentially a form of parodic banging. I would identify the *non sequitur* in Mark 10:35–40 as a thematic *non sequitur*, enacted by the characters James and John, and with humorous features.

[42] Essentially, what they want is power and the glory that goes along with it. This whole incident (10:35–40) can be described as "a parody on power" where James and John's notion of glory is juxtaposed against that of Jesus (Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 98). In using the term "glory," James and John may well be referring back to Jesus' usage of the term in the first passion prediction where he talked about "the Son of Man… [coming] in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

[43] An example of the response of laughter evoked in an audience by this story can be found in a video performance of the Gospel (McLean, "Mark's Gospel," 56:08—57:45). Camery-Hoggatt describes the situation as "a kind of 'comedy of errors'" (Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 160).

[44] Gundry, *Mark*, 577.

[45] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 17.

definite development of the humour and irony that progresses towards Jesus' words in 10:42–45. This progression provides emphasis and prominence for Jesus' teaching there.

As with Harry's interaction with Voldemort, Jesus' interaction with James and John in this episode is loaded with dramatic irony. After the brothers present their request to him, Jesus declares to them, "You do not know what you are asking" (10:38). He is essentially identifying the dramatic irony as it is occurring.[46]

The dramatic irony continues in Jesus' words in 10:40: "but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." The narrator knows who will be on the right and left of Jesus and who will drink the same cup with him. At this point James and John do not understand this. The audience, if they have not already heard Mark's story to the end, will be included in this knowledge later in the narrative when they hear of the two bandits crucified with Jesus, "one on his right and one on his left" (15:27).[47] If this is, indeed, a situation of foreshadowing, then the two who will be with him at his right and left, also on crosses, will be two criminals, also condemned to die.

The irony is that James and John are picturing a certain type of glory whereas Jesus is thinking of another type of glory. Tolbert states that "despite what the disciples might wish, Jesus' coming 'in his glory' is Jesus crucified on a cross."[48] This is what Jesus is referring to when he says to the brothers, "You do not know what you are

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[46] "Jesus… is aware of the irony" (Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 162).

[47] There is an overwhelming consensus among scholars maintaining that the reference to the right and left (10:37, 40) indicates the bandits at Jesus' right and left in Mark 15:27: Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 247; Gundry, *Mark*, 577; France, *Gospel of Mark*, 418; Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 278, 387; Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 31; Evans, *Mark*, 118; Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, 51; Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 110−11, 159; Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 114–15. Neither Bock nor Santos mention any connection between Mark 10:40 and 15:27 (Bock, *Mark*; Santos, *Slave of All*).

[48] Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 32.; cf. Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 161.

asking" in 10:38. The content of what they do not know is that the glory of Jesus is the cross. Jesus has described the kind of sacrificial glory he means in what he has just pronounced in the passion prediction and he will now flesh it out in the instructions he gives in Mark 10:42–45.

Either interpretation of glory, whether in Jesus' future triumphant glory or on the cross, entails suffering first.[49] The question of whether James and John are willing to travel the road of suffering and death is a critical one. Moreover, the fact that both Jesus and Harry Potter are willing to go down this path highlights the question of whether James and John are willing to follow Jesus by taking up their crosses.[50] The appeal of James and John for privilege and honour is thereby "turned on its head."[51] Irony is thus used as a tool to get across this theme of reversal.

The humour and irony in the account of James and John's request brings to the forefront their grasping for power. Examples of those grasping for power in the Harry Potter story, juxtaposed with this episode, can also help to highlight this. In the Potterverse, Voldemort clings to power so that he can be "truly invulnerable."[52] For him,

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[49] With respect to the use of the words ποτήριον ("cup") and βάπτισμα ("baptism") in 10:38–39, the evidence generally points toward an understanding of suffering. The reference to a cup in both 14:23–24 (the Last Supper) and 14:36 (Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane) both have a context of suffering. Tolbert and Evans maintain that the cup used at the Last Supper is not associated with the cup mentioned in 10:38–39 (Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 213–14; Evans, *Mark*, 117). However, Jesus' mention of his blood would indicate a connection with suffering. Other biblical references to a cup can be either positive (Pss 16:5; 23:5; 116:13) or negative (Pss 11:6; 75:8; Isa 51:17–22; Jer 25:15; 49:12; 51:7; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23:31–32; Hab 2:15; Rev 14:10; 16:19). The negative ones are related to suffering, often (but not always) in a context of punishment. According to Bock, associating the cup with a martyr's death is "too specific" (Bock, *Mark*, 280–81). Baptism here has the sense of being "overwhelmed by some difficult experience or ordeal" or "to suffer, to undergo" (Louw and Nida, *Greek English Lexicon*, 285. See also Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 338). I would therefore conclude that Jesus' reference to the cup and baptism here is about suffering with a possible connotation of death.

[50] This is also underscored by the contrast of Harry and Jesus with Voldemort, who is absolutely unwilling to die, and certainly not for others.

[51] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 100.

[52] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 497.

gaining power is linked to immortality.[53] He and his followers regard power as essential in addition to considering it a virtue. Since his power is obtained by force it is necessary to maintain it by coercive force and micromanagement, making him a typical tyrant.[54] Others in the books are seen to be grasping. The Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge refuses to listen to sensible advisors so he can hold on to his power and the appearance that he is in complete control.[55] Ludo Bagman's greed in *Goblet of Fire* is also a form of grasping since he is a person in authority who uses his power and privilege for his own gain.[56] Dolores Umbridge delights in tyranny over others.[57] Her desperation for power becomes her undoing. She follows some of her students to the Forbidden Forest because she wants access to a secret weapon that Dumbledore has supposedly left there. Her mocking of marginalized groups comes back to haunt her when they resist and strike back against her.[58] It is interesting, in this situation, that humour and irony are used to unmask Umbridge and show her greed for power. It parallels how humour and irony are used to unmask how foolish James and John's grasping for power is. In each of these instances, the greed and thirst for power of these individuals leads to harming or putting others at risk. This is in contrast to those who do not grasp after power or privilege but rather lay it aside, something I will examine with regard to the Harry Potter narrative later in this chapter.

Although James and John are not oppressors or rulers, their thirst for power puts them at risk of abusing that power if they attain it. A postcolonial approach helps us to

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[53] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 189.
[54] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 11–12, 142.
[55] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 89.
[56] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 307, 315, 388–89.
[57] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 259.
[58] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 658–66.

recognize that, as James and John are unmasked, they reveal themselves to be connected with the values of the very empire toward which they most likely have an attitude of resistance. "They are borrowing an image of imperial rule, as if that is what Jesus' program of the kingdom of God is all about."[59] Feminist biblical criticism helps us to see the two brothers as entitled, privileged characters who want even *more* privilege and power.[60] They show themselves to be part of what Wink calls the Domination System and what feminists refer to as the patriarchy or kyriarchy.

This is not the first time that positions of power and status have been an aspiration for James and John. In Mark 9:33–34, they and the other disciples were arguing about who of them was the greatest. Jesus responded, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all" (9:35).[61] However, this did not deter the two brothers from continuing to pursue power and greatness. The fact that they have not given up on this idea is an indication that they are overly preoccupied with it.[62] Jesus is well aware that this preoccupation must be effectively dealt with. His next step with his disciples will be to give his final teaching on how to renounce such ambitions.

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[59] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 124.

[60] Interestingly, Jesus will later reproach the scribes who are willing to exploit others in order to enhance their own privilege (Mark 12:38–40). Dowd sees this as a warning connected back to the incident with James and John and therefore intended not only for the scribes: "It seems likely this invective is only partly a critique of a second temple leadership group within Israel. The reference to 'best seats' and 'place of honor' recalls not only the request of James and John, but also the previous quarrels over who was the greatest (9:34−35) and the Markan Jesus' admonitions against such jockeying for position (10:41−45)" (Dowd, *Reading Mark,* 133).

[61] See also Mark 10:43–44.

[62] They are also putting their ties to their family of origin above the fictive kinship ties of the new community (Moxnes, "What is Family?," 35).

The Teaching of Jesus (Mark 10:42–45)

In Mark 10:41, the other ten disciples are indignant with what has happened. Jesus calls them aside, along with James and John, and begins to teach them. It is important to recognize that what he says to them flows directly out of the conversation he has just had with James and John. The things *they* were wanting were the things of which Jesus says, "it is not so among you" (10:43).

It is only the twelve Jesus is speaking to here. It is not the crowds. It is not marginalized or vulnerable groups like women, slaves, or children. It is the ones who, on two separate occasions, felt entitled enough to discuss "who was the greatest" among them (9:34) or who would sit at Jesus' right and left in his glory (10:37). They are the ones who need to hear this message.

How Humour Highlights Jesus' Teaching

From the very beginning, the Harry Potter narrative deals with serious topics such as death, oppression, alienation, and self-sacrifice. Yet there is humour woven throughout. As Iverson has suggested, humour can serve to disarm an audience so that they will be more likely to be open to what is being communicated.[63]

Voldemort and Umbridge are both shown to be ridiculous. By using humour in this way to highlight their absurdity, it paradoxically underscores the seriousness of the subject matter. Readers of the Harry Potter novels are drawn into the story because of the humour. This helps them to see these characters for who they are, purveyors of corruption and tyranny. People are suffering and dying because of their actions. Readers

[63] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 17–18.

thus see the effects of the Domination System and what happens when power is misused.

It is especially remarkable to examine the portrayal of Voldemort and how humour is used to gradually unmask him and thereby move the narrative along. Voldemort's tyranny and obsession with power comes across as sinister and frightening throughout much of the Harry Potter series. However, as he is unmasked, he begins to appear merely pompous or flashy and, at times, quite pathetic. Several incidents in the story serve to ridicule Voldemort and show him to be an absurd character: his repeated failed attempts to defeat Harry; the information we learn about the futility of his effort to become immortal in the conversation between Dumbledore and Harry at King's Cross;[64] his betrayal by Narcissa Malfoy in the Forbidden Forest.[65] Of particular interest with respect to how humour is used is Voldemort's "victorious procession" into the Hogwarts grounds with the mistaken assumption that he has killed Harry.[66] This scene is quite amusing and also has somewhat of a carnivalesque sense to it. The triumphant conqueror enters the city gates having defeated his enemy. However, unbeknownst to him, he is not actually a conqueror but a fool. A reversal will soon occur and he will be overthrown by the same *young boy* he is so proud to have defeated. Through this symbolic inversion, the mercilessness and cruel mocking that Voldemort casts towards Harry comes back to be his own undoing. He is defined by what he wills for others. All of this builds up to the final encounter with Harry where Voldemort is finally

[64] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 708–14.
[65] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 726.
[66] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 728, cf. 729–32.

vanquished. Readers can observe how his efforts have become fruitless and are likely to come to the conclusion that grasping after power is an endeavour that is utterly fruitless.

A similar use of humour to progress the narrative is happening in Mark 10:32–45. The audience is presented with the encounter between Jesus and the two brothers. Coming just after his passion prediction, James and John's request is understood as a callous and absurd non sequitur. The humour in the situation helps to provoke a reaction against what James and John have done by showing how foolish it is. This, in turn, creates an environment that encourages openness to what Jesus is saying in his teaching that follows. In other words, empathy for Jesus' response has been fostered since the audience would feel his response to James and John is justified. According to Iverson, there would also be an empathy or "fidelity" with the twelve disciples whom Jesus is addressing. The audience would identify with them. Iverson's words describing the incident in Mark 8:14–21 also fit perfectly with the context of 10:41–45: Jesus' words are "intended to address any would-be feelings of audience superiority. Issued in the character of Jesus, the rebuke of the Twelve becomes a direct rebuke of the audience (who have taken on the role of the disciples in the closing verses of the scene)."[67] The audience thus sees themselves among those being spoken to by Jesus. Subsequently, as I will show, Jesus uses irony to enhance the effect of the humour. He keeps the audience's attention by unmasking the rulers and tyrants he speaks of and showing how not only the twelve disciples, but also those in the Markan audience, are to avoid such conduct. Such reversals correspond to those in the Harry Potter story. Also as in the Harry Potter story, humour works contrapuntally to expose the inferiority of the imperial system. By

[67] Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 17.

being drawn into the narrative, the audience has also become open to hearing the other deeply provocative things Jesus says, such as the mandate to become a "slave of all" (10:44). The whole scene builds on the humorous encounter with James and John and comes to a climax in the teaching of Jesus to the twelve. In this way, humour serves to emphasize the flow of the episode as well as underscoring the rhetorical impact of Jesus' words.

Irony in Mark 10:42

Related to how humour can be used to highlight certain elements in the text is how irony is used. Harry Potter uses irony and sarcasm to challenge the authority of those in power, particularly those who abuse their power. His sarcasm to Professor Umbridge is a big part of how he stands up to her and he is willing to get in trouble for it in order to speak truth to power.[68] Harry's use of irony with Voldemort, including calling him by his birthname Tom Riddle, demonstrates that he believes he is not someone who is truly powerful, rather, that he is someone who is merely human and ordinary.[69] This serves to unmask Voldemort and contributes to the process that leads to his final defeat.

Likewise, in his teaching in Mark 10:42–45, particularly in 10:42, I would argue that Jesus uses irony to convey that the "rulers" and "tyrants" he is talking about are not really what they seem to be. Their reputation exceeds reality. Part of this is seen in the evidence for irony in the use of the word δοκοῦντες. Concerning this word, translated as "they recognize as" in the NRSV, there is some debate as to whether it is being used

[68] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 220–21.
[69] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 738, 741.

ironically. However, the preponderance of the evidence seems to indicate an ironic usage.[70] I would therefore propose that, in 10:42, δοκοῦντες has the sense of modifying the word ἄρχειν ("rulers") with the idea of "so-called" or "supposed." Jesus uses irony to communicate that the "rulers" and "great ones" are only considered to be so or are *supposedly* rulers or great ones. The literary context within the episode as a whole would support this, beginning with his description of what these same "rulers" would do to him in the way of torture and execution (10:34). His purpose is to denigrate the reputation of these rulers through his ironic depiction of them in 10:42. In an act of parodic banging, Jesus juxtaposes who these rulers are reputed to be with who they really are, thus revealing their true character.

Who, though, is being parodied by Jesus' words? "In both his actions and teaching Jesus opposed the Roman imperial order and its effects on subject peoples."[71] The rulers whom Jesus is using as negative examples in 10:42–43 are specified as the rulers of the Gentiles. These would be the emperors of Rome and Rome's

[70] Gundry argues that the lack of anything like δοκοῦντες in the second stich of the verse referring to "great ones" means they actually *are* great and that this can be directed back to the first stich implying that the rulers are truly rulers (Gundry, *Mark*, 579). His view is that any irony would recur in the second stich. Kaminouchi disputes this: "If the reader understands the irony in the first stich, he or she does not need to have another indication in the second part of the parallelism in order to be aware of it" (Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 122). Beavis points out that δοκοῦντες likely has a sense of "think" or "appear" since God is always viewed as the true sovereign in the scripture (Beavis, *Mark*, 158). Hooker also sees it as indicating "that their rule is only apparent and is unreal in the eyes of God" (Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 247). There is a use of the word in Euripides that seems to have a positive connotation of the word, with a translation of "strong reputation" (Eur., *Hec*. 294–95. See also Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 499; Winn, "Tyrant or Servant?," 341n33). Similarly, Louw and Nida define it as "those who have a reputation of being important or are generally recognized as being important" (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 737). I would say there is certainly scope within this understanding of the word for an ironic usage where Jesus identifies their reputation but does not claim that it is based on an accurate assessment of their qualification for leadership. Paul's use of the word δοκέω in Galatians (2:2, 6, 9) would support this. His repetition of the "acknowledged" character of the leaders there is quite overstated, and I thus take it to be ironic.

[71] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 126.

representatives in Israel.[72] Examples in the Gospel of Mark would be Pilate (15:1–15) and Herod Antipas (6:14–15).[73] Kaminouchi notes that Herod is referred to as βασιλεύς six times in the account in Mark 6:14–29, even though he was not a king but only a tetrarch.[74] He also suggests that this is to emphasize the irony that Herod is someone who is in a position of power and yet is powerless because of circumstances including the manipulation of his wife Herodias and his own ill-conceived vow combined with his attitude of being beholden to his elite guests. "[I]t is the system of power, a web of relationships among elite men and women, that holds the real power. The king is only a puppet in the hands of invisible but very real powers."[75] This corresponds well with what I propose Jesus is ironically expressing with the phrase οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν in Mark 10:42: those who are merely reputed to be rulers. However, I would argue that Jesus has challenged other authorities throughout the Gospel who have bought into the values of this imperial Domination system.[76] This is what Jesus is using irony to caution his disciples against.

Here again, there are symbolic inversion and carnivalesque elements at play. The kings and rulers are shown to be fools and the one who has been mocked as a fool (Jesus) is shown to be the truly powerful one. This is similar to how Voldemort, who

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[72] These are the same "colonial Roman authorities" who will torture and execute Jesus (Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 133).

[73] Herod recognizes that John the Baptist "was a righteous and holy man" (6:20) and I have already mentioned that Pilate is aware that Jesus is blameless (15:14). In spite of this, they each have the innocent man in their charge executed (6:27; 15:15); cf. Smith, "Tyranny Exposed," 282–83. This fits with Philo's disparaging description of Pilate as someone known for "his corruption . . . acts of insolence . . . cruelty . . . continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity" (Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 38:302. See also Bond, "Philo of Alexandria and Mark 15," 239). All this is evidence of Pilate's and Herod's tyrannical approach to power.

[74] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So,* 175.

[75] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So,* 187.

[76] One example that I addressed in the previous chapter is the scribes Jesus denounced in Mark 12:38–40.

mocked and oppressed Harry, is shown to be the fool whereas Harry prevails. Both Jesus and Harry Potter unmask their adversaries and show the *empire* to have no clothes. Both go on to take a better way than these pretenders to power. That way is represented by laying aside the Elder Wand.

Laying Aside the Elder Wand

The concept of laying aside ultimate power in the form of the Elder Wand is central in understanding questions of motivation and power dynamics within the Harry Potter books. Harry is not the only one who rejects ultimate power. He has a model in Dumbledore who declines the Minister of Magic position on numerous occasions.[77] Vanessa Zoltan, in her podcast *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*, comments on Dumbledore's statement "Voldemort had powers I will never have."[78] She suggests that Dumbledore is here expressing something like the following: "Voldemort has harnessed powers that I will never choose to have . . . Voldemort went down a road that I will never go down."[79] Dumbledore is well aware that, for him, following this particular path with the Ministry has a great risk of leading to an autocratic use of power. Interestingly, he himself *does* accept the Elder Wand; however, he rejects the thing that he knows *will* lead him down a tyrannical path.

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[77] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 717.

[78] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 14.

[79] Zoltan and ter Kuile, "Commitment," 16:35—17:15. Later in the same podcast episode, Casper ter Kuile observes, "Dumbledore's core struggle is with power. The fact that that he chooses not to become Minister of Magic is so much to do with his fear of how he would use his own power" (Zoltan and ter Kuile, "Commitment," 17:55—18:05).

For the one who controls it, the Elder Wand has ultimate power and is "unbeatable, invincible."[80] Paradoxically, the Elder Wand is also associated with what might initially appear to be weakness and powerlessness. Through love and sacrifice, often deemed weak, one is able to lay aside the Elder Wand. The three Deathly Hallows (Elder Wand, Resurrection Stone, and Cloak of Invisibility), are not intended to be sought. They are effective primarily when they are passed on or conferred on someone and not grasped. In "The Tale of the Three Brothers" concerning the Deathly Hallows, the first two brothers ask for a most powerful wand and "the power to recall others from Death" respectively.[81] They grasp after powers that are not appropriate to have and this ends up being their undoing. In the same manner, Voldemort tries to seize power over Death and it becomes a weak spot for him.[82] He is also so desperately grasping after the Elder Wand that he is willing to kill even Snape, whom he believes to be a loyal follower.[83] Because the Hallows are not meant to be pursued, there is an important connection with how Dumbledore devised his task concerning the Mirror of Erised at the end of *Philosopher's Stone*.[84] Only the one who wants to find the Stone, but not benefit from its powers, will see oneself in the Mirror.[85] This is not a stance that Harry automatically embraces. He struggles with the question of "Hallows versus Horcruxes?" and feels, at first, that he is meant to pursue the Hallows because they will guarantee attaining victory.[86] He becomes consumed with this idea but realizes his preoccupation

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[80] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 435; cf. 408, 716–17.
[81] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 407.
[82] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 718.
[83] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 656.
[84] The Mirror of Erised shows people "the deepest, most desperate desire of [their] hearts" (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 157). The word "Erised" is "desire" backwards.
[85] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 217.
[86] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 429–30.

with it is taking away his joy.[87] It is not until he is digging Dobby's grave and contemplating the elf's sacrifice that Harry realizes what is important. He is therefore no longer fixated on the Hallows and what they can do for him and decides to follow the Horcruxes instead.[88] He has already at this point, in one sense, laid aside the three Hallows, including the Elder Wand.[89] Harry takes away Voldemort's power to humiliate and oppress him and others by denying that the Elder Wand has any power over him and by declaring that this is not the kind of power he wants to use because it oppresses others.

Even before becoming acquainted with the Hallows and the Elder Wand, Harry shows great affinity toward the idea of laying aside ultimate power. This is seen in his preference for the *Expelliarmus* spell whose purpose is to disarm people rather than to injure or kill them. He uses it over and over, including with Voldemort.[90] It gets to the point where Remus Lupin calls it Harry's "signature move" and cautions him not to become too reliant on it.[91] This is in contrast to Voldemort whose signature move is *Avada Kedavra*, the killing curse. Once again, Harry's use of the *Expelliarmus* spell, and the compassion that drives it, is a factor in defeating Voldemort.[92]

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[87] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 435.

[88] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 479, 484; Granger, *Harry Potter's Bookshelf*, 136.

[89] He continues to wrestle with the idea that to let go of the wand is a sign of passivity: "The enormity of his decision not to race Voldemort to the wand still scared Harry. He could not remember, ever before, choosing *not* to act" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 502). However, his commitment and action after this decision indicate that this is not the case (Friedman, "Militant Literacy," 202).

[90] Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 265, 279; *Goblet of Fire*, 575: *Order of the Phoenix*, 348; *Deathly Hallows*, 59, 743.

[91] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 71.

[92] This spell is what allows him to defeat Voldemort at the Battle of Hogwarts, since Harry is the true master of the Elder Wand at that point although Voldemort is in possession of it. When Voldemort attempts to use it to cast the killing curse it returns to Harry in response to the *Expelliarmus* curse.

The intertextual connection between Harry's willingness to lay aside the elder wand and the posture of Jesus toward dominating power is key to the thesis of this study. The reading lens of Harry Potter highlights how Jesus acts to resist and subvert the role of the Domination System, the system of empire that thrives on the thirst for ultimate power, in the lives of his followers. Essentially, Jesus rejects and renounces the Domination System which is parallel to Harry laying aside the ultimate power of the Elder Wand and the control it would have over him.[93] Laying aside the Elder wand means not buying into the power system it represents.[94] Wink observes, "One does not become free from the Powers by defeating them in a frontal attack. Rather, one dies to their control. Here also the cross is the model: we are liberated, not by striking back at what enslaves us—for even striking back reveals that we are still determined by its violent ethos—but by dying out from under its jurisdiction and command."[95] Furthermore, this laying aside the ultimate power of the corrupted Domination System is itself a subversive and powerful form of resistance against that very system. I would suggest it is *the* most effective form of resistance, the one that can ultimately bring it down.

In his teaching that follows the incident with James and John, Jesus recognizes the danger of grasping for power—that it could be the undoing of the disciples. He therefore takes the twelve aside to give them special counsel regarding this concern.

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[93] Bartchy sees both Jesus and the author of 1 Timothy as renouncing absolute power and proposes that the absolute power (αὐθεντεῖν) of 1 Tim 2:12 is the same type of power Jesus is talking about in 10:42–44 (Bartchy, "Power, Submission," 71–72). This is an intriguing possibility.

[94] The Harry Potter novels are not the only example in popular culture where power is seen as something to treat with restraint and caution. In one of Ursula Le Guin's fantasy novels, the character Ged observes this kind of self-control in his mentor and "wonder[s] what was the good of having power if you were too wise to use it" (Le Guin, *Wizard of Earthsea*, 20–21).

[95] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 157.

Most importantly, he provides them with a model (himself) of willingness to renounce dominating power and put others first. He has just reminded them that they "know" how the Gentile (Roman) rulers misuse power. Now he fervently warns them: "It is not so among you" (10:43). Jesus is inviting his followers to a new way of life that may not at first seem as satisfying or glory-filled as one that involves possessing power that dominates others. However, it is ultimately a better way that involves giving to and empowering others. Once again, there is irony here—a paradox. Like the Elder Wand, the power that is laid aside is the most powerful.

Jesus, the Truly Powerful One

True power is to set aside the appealing but false power of the Elder Wand. True power (empowerment) gives to others and does not take or grasp for oneself. Harry Potter's concern for others and his self-sacrifice are not signs of weakness, nor do they diminish his power. On the contrary, they enrich it. Likewise, Jesus' service and willingness to put others first do not diminish his power; rather, they enhance it. In the first part of Mark's Gospel (1:1—8:21), what Jesus does for others displays his great power. "Exorcisms, miracles and teaching are the means by which Jesus' power is manifested."[96]

Jesus is portrayed in Mark's Gospel as the "more powerful" (1:7) one, the one who teaches with such authority that his audience is astonished (1:22, 27).[97] Throughout the Gospel story, Jesus empowers others and gives of himself. Another unintended

[96] Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So*, 198.
[97] Interestingly, the scribes are described as not having authority like Jesus (1:22).

pointer to Jesus' authority is found in Mark 15:18 where the Roman soldiers taunt Jesus with the title "King of the Jews," hoping to humiliate him. The soldiers unknowingly highlight the identity of Jesus as the true king through the use of irony.[98]

In the Harry Potter books, overcoming tyranny and oppression is closely related to what one does with power. The one who could unite all three Deathly Hallows (the invisibility cloak, the resurrection stone and the Elder Wand) "would then be truly master of death . . . 'invincible.'"[99] This invincibility indicates great power. Jesus was also identified as having great power by John the Baptist who called Jesus "one more powerful" (Mark 1:7). Dumbledore declared to Harry, "You are the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying."[100] These characteristics could be used to describe Jesus' *via crucis* and his attitude of self-sacrifice for others. They show that "the true master of death" would certainly be a good way to describe Jesus.

Jesus uses his power to effectively resist. It is to the chief priests, elders, and scribes that Jesus makes his most powerful statement of resistance during his trials: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power" (Mark 14:62). The strength of the resistance is seen also by the reaction of those in power: their own power is threatened. The words are so provocative that the high priest tears his clothes and calls

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[98] Camery-Hoggatt identifies this as dramatic irony because this incident "plays upon the reader's own repertoire of knowledge and convictions to produce a distinctive subtext" (Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 2). However, there is also verbal irony and parodic banging here since what the soldiers say is in opposition to what they mean. Kelber sees this same title, put in the inscription above the cross of Jesus (15:26), ironically signifying "the cross as a place of enthronement" (Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, 82).

[99] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 717.

[100] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 720−21.

the words of Jesus blasphemous (14:63–64). Although they go on to condemn him to death, his statement continues to live on two thousand years later. This certainly gives credence to the following statement by James Scott: "The perpetrators of certain acts of defiance may be repressed, but their speech and actions cannot be retracted from the popular memory."[101] This result is not surprising since these words by Jesus are an act of power and the culmination of his resistance. It is a public and fully-developed ("cooked") expression of defiance.[102] Jesus is here living out this model of how to resist and his followers can see how it is done.

Serving and Putting Others First

After describing the Gentile rulers to the twelve, Jesus gives them the following instructions: "But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 43–45). The themes of serving and putting others first (self-sacrifice) are pronounced. These themes have strong resonance with similar themes in the other two teachings associated with passion predictions. In Mark 8:34–38, Jesus talks to the crowd and his disciples about taking up their cross and following him, displaying a willingness to lose their lives. In the second teaching, he tells the twelve, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (9:35) and that they need to be willing to welcome a small child (9:37).[103]

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[101] Scott, *Domination*, 216.
[102] Scott, *Domination*, 216.
[103] See Mark 9:33–37.

Concerning serving and self-sacrifice, Jesus tells them in this third passion teaching that "whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (10:44). This echoes back to his recent words in 10:31 about how "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first," spoken in the context of Peter and the other disciples who had "left everything to follow" Jesus (10:28), including their homes and families. This is analogous to Harry's decision to give up his last year at Hogwarts School.[104] Harry considers Hogwarts "the first and best home he had known"[105] and he misses it terribly when he is not there.[106] It is therefore significant that he is willing to give it up in order to resist the evil that Voldemort is perpetrating in both the magical and non-magical worlds.

When it comes to self-sacrifice in the narrative, Harry himself is the paradigm. He had a good model of self-sacrifice in the actions of his own mother who gave her life for him.[107] His own self-sacrifice is therefore intertwined with Lily's love for him. Dobby can see that "Harry Potter risks his own life for his friends!"[108] and Dumbledore recognizes that Harry had used the resurrection stone to "enable [his] self-sacrifice."[109]

For the most part, the house-elves in the books do not resist their enslavement nor hope for manumission. The one exception would be Dobby who wants to be a free elf. This has the potential to be quite confusing for the reader. While Dobby, on the one

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[104] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 606.
[105] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 697.
[106] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 8.
[107] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 736; *Deathly Hallows*, 710.
[108] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 134. Dobby himself was a model of self-sacrifice in how he gave his own life for Harry and his friends (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 473−76).
[109] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 720.

hand, is presented as someone who is proud to be free, he is also depicted as overly deferential and grovelling. He seems devoted to servitude even though he is free.[110]

It is interesting, but disturbing, that the elves marginalize *themselves* in addition to how they are marginalized by others. Dobby physically and verbally abuses himself as punishment.[111] The elves also do not believe it is appropriate or permissible for them to speak their minds.[112] There is internalized oppression and racism occurring here. This is because the oppression is so pervasive it becomes ingrained even within the marginalized house-elves themselves. The elves seem to have an "internalized logic of bondage" built up over many generations of oppressive messaging.[113] It is thus possible that these are circumstances of "false consciousness," a sociological concept describing people who are unaware of or unable to realize their own oppression.[114]

All of this has interesting implications regarding Jesus' words about servanthood in his teaching here. The questions that arise out of this examination of these fictional elves and their enslavement have relevance for readers of Mark's Gospel in the real world today. The key question is whether this type of behaviour is what Jesus is advocating in his instructions. Concerning this, Dowd states, "The concept of self-denial in Mark must be interpreted in the context of the Gospel narrative as a whole. It does not mean adopting the posture of a doormat by abandoning all sense of self . . . [but] rather, abandoning all claims to self-definition and accepting and asserting God's program for

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[110] Carey, "Hermione and the House-Elves Revisited," 165. Barratt notes that it can be bewildering to try to work out whether the circumstances of the elves in the novels are "meant to illustrate key lessons about enslavement in the Muggle world, or are . . . purely fictitious with no real world analogue" (Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 47).

[111] Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 16, 134; *Goblet of Fire*, 332.

[112] Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 331. This is the case here even after Dobby has obtained his freedom.

[113] Carey, "Hermione and the House-Elves," 104.

[114] Barratt, *Politics of Harry Potter*, 50.

and God's claim upon one's life."[115] In other words, Jesus' teaching does not take away a person's agency, but rather fosters it. Jesus' words of instruction about serving do not mean that people are to allow themselves to be mistreated, humiliated, or treated as doormats. They do not mean that true followers of Jesus who put others before themselves are to think of themselves as having little or no value. Rather, as Wink asserts, instead of devaluing people by making them slaves, what Jesus is doing in this Markan text is lifting up those who *are* slaves and increasing their value.[116] Thus, in one sense, Dobby is the kind of person who puts the needs of others first and is therefore to be emulated. However, the way he often treats himself should not be encouraged or modeled.

How then is servanthood to be done? Other than Jesus, the ones who are presented as models of serving and self-sacrifice in the Gospel of Mark are the women. Miller sees the women in Mark as exemplars of the kind of service and self-giving that Jesus promoted, particularly with respect to Mark 10:42–45.[117] This is demonstrated by the fact that, other than here in 10:45 (where Jesus is referring to himself), the verb διακονέω ("to serve") is only used to refer to women in Mark's Gospel (1:31; 15:41) and never refers to male disciples as serving.[118] The women can therefore be contrasted with Jesus' male disciples and shown to be positive models of serving. The woman who anoints Jesus in 14:3–9 is another instance of someone who gives of herself to perform

[115] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 89.
[116] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 358n33.
[117] Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 193–95, 202–4.
[118] Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 194, 202. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that the understanding of the term in the passage must not be limited to "table service" because it "summarizes the whole ministry of Jesus, who does not subordinate and enslave others in the manner of gentile rulers (10:42), but . . . liberates and elevates them from servitude" (Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 320).

"a good service for" Jesus (καλὸν ἔργον ἠργάσατο ἐν ἐμοί, 14:6). Jesus honours her action and declares that "what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (14:9). I propose that the woman's action goes well beyond the self-sacrifice of giving away a costly perfume.[119] It is a provocative and courageous act that does not fit with the "doormat" concept of servanthood. This woman goes against the status quo to do the work of a prophet since prophets tended to be and were generally expected to be men. This is a prophetic act of resistance. Her prophecy is not in words but in her actions that identified Jesus as a king. In addition to going against the status quo, it was an act of resistance to identify Jesus as a king or the Messiah. It was an act of political defiance and his opponents more than likely would have seen it as such. Schüssler Fiorenza is therefore correct to label this "a politically dangerous story."[120] Hooker sees the anointing as likely serving a two-pronged purpose: to anoint Jesus for his burial but also as the anointing of a King and Messiah. She emphasizes the significant and "anomalous" nature of such an act being carried out by a woman instead of a priest.[121] In Mark 15:40–41, the evangelist informs us that women were on the journey to Jerusalem with Jesus all along and therefore among the followers described in 10:32. Their exemplary service is again seen by how they "provided for him" (15:41). This is

[119] This would be less of a sacrifice if the woman was wealthy, in any case.

[120] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xiv.

[121] Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 328. Bock also maintains that this kind of anointing would only be done for "kings and other prominent figures" (Bock, *Mark*, 335). Cranfield acknowledges that Jesus knew he was being anointed in 14:8 but does not consider it probable that the woman was aware that she was anointing Jesus as the Messiah (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 415). In response to this, Evans asks, "Why would the woman not think of her action as a messianic anointing? Her action was spontaneous and impromptu and would not have been interpreted in any official sense, to be sure, but anointing the head of one whom she and the disciples regarded as Israel's Messiah would in all probability have been perceived in a messianic sense" (Evans, *Mark*, 360).

why feminist biblical criticism is important. It can help us to see those in the text who might otherwise be invisible.

Jesus has some further words to say about servanthood, slavery, and freedom in 10:44–45. He declares to the twelve that they need to be slaves "of all" but then also explains to them that he himself will be "a ransom for many" indicating their redemption. Dowd points out that Jesus' words in this verse help the reader to look both backwards and forwards to see that "[a]ll that Jesus has done so far falls into the category of serving" and then look towards the forthcoming passion.[122] The word for "ransom" (λύτρον) is usually understood as providing a ransom for the release of a slave or prisoner of war.[123] The liberation of those who are enslaved or captive is therefore in mind. Setting captives free is something that Harry Potter does from the very beginning of the series when he frees the boa constrictor at the zoo.[124] He also helps to rescue those on trial for being Muggle-born by working side-by-side with them.[125] Harry goes so far as to sacrifice his very life for others.[126] Jesus, in the ultimate self-sacrifice, proclaims here that he will "give his life a ransom for many" implying all humankind.[127] Jesus is therefore the antitype who amplifies Harry the type, in terms of sacrificing himself for the benefit of others. There is also amplification in how Jesus gives his all to liberate those who are enslaved whereas Harry often falls short of doing what is best for those who have been enslaved. Jesus surpasses Harry in how he acts justly towards others and

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[122] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 112.
[123] Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 342.
[124] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 25–26.
[125] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 262–66.
[126] Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 697–98.
[127] There is some suggestion that this can be understood as giving his life for *all* when juxtaposed with 1Tim 2:6 ("gave himself a ransom for all") (Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 343). "A ransom for many" is thus another, perhaps more expressive, way of saying a ransom for *all*.

puts them first. He is the true model for justice, an amplification of the weak, human stumbling for justice seen in Harry Potter and in us. Nevertheless, Harry is a Christ-figure who is known for his self-sacrifice, concern for justice, and resistance against oppressors. It is more meaningful that Jesus goes beyond someone who possesses these qualities than if it was said he went beyond someone who did not have them at all or was the opposite. Harry fulfills his role as Christ-figure by being like Jesus in a number of ways, in the same manner that a type is *like* an anti-type or a stamp is *like* the person whose image it depicts.

Juxtaposing the Harry Potter literature against the teachings of Jesus brings to the forefront several important issues regarding serving and putting others first that I have addressed here. Certain interpretations of the Gospel text can lead to misuse and even abuse. For instance, Jesus' words here have been used to subjugate women and other marginalized people and lay on them a type of menial service not appropriate to the text. Jesus' instructions can instead be seen in a liberative way that frees people from what enslaves them, builds them up, and empowers them. Service and self-sacrifice, when not used to devalue, can therefore be central to such empowerment. In turn, empowerment is at the heart of imagining a new community of Jesus' followers.

Imagining a New Community

After describing to his followers the way of tyranny and lording it over others in Mark 10:42 and then telling them "it is not so among you" (10:43), Jesus does not leave them hanging. He does not merely tell them what not to do; he shows them a better way. Indeed, he has been showing them a better way in all the teachings following the passion

predictions. He then models this for them in his own life and in his willingness to suffer and die. This better way contrasts starkly with the grasping for power seen, for example, in Voldemort and in the "rulers" and "great ones" described in Mark 10:42.[128] Jesus lives out a radical form of servanthood that puts others first. He shows his disciples a new way of leading and using power. He empowers others and encourages them to do the same. He is a strong ally for those who have been marginalized and oppressed.

Effective allies like Jesus are those who empower others. Empowerment is true power since true power gives rather than taking. Empowerment often helps people to see their story in a new way. When Hagrid tells Harry, "yer a wizard" he gives him information that not only helps him reframe his past, it empowers him with a hope-filled future.[129] Professor McGonagall passionately defends Harry to Umbridge in his career counselling session. She thus empowers him to be an Auror (his chosen career) and cultivates the hope he has for the future.[130] Harry's recounting how his mother Lily modeled courage and allyship empowers Horace Slughorn to reimagine himself into a courageous resister.[131]

The better way offered by Jesus helps to imagine a new kind of community. Other ways that this new community has been described in this work are as an *ekklēsia* or in terms of fictive kinship. Such a community is contrapuntal. It engages with and resists the status quo. It stands against the imperial values that are centred on domination and subjugation. Instead, it provides a transformative space where justice, flourishing,

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[128] It is "the *modus operandi* of the imperial system of tyrants and rulers" (Samuel, *Postcolonial Reading*, 133).

[129] Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 42.

[130] Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 584–87.

[131] Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince*, 457–59; *Deathly Hallows*, 735; Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance*, 39.

and "radical equality" are envisioned.[132] It is a community where all are welcome, including Harry Potter enthusiasts who may have a reluctance to join. Thus, the role of the reading guide is an important one because one function of the lens they provide is to show the Harry Potter audience that they are welcome into this community imagined by Jesus.

Conclusion

It has become evident during this analysis that the intertextual connections between the Harry Potter narrative and Mark 10:32–45 are abundant. Looking at Harry Potter as a figure of Jesus Christ has helped to uncover several illuminating parallels. Understanding how parody and irony work in the text has also been revealing. The extent to which humour is present and underscores the rhetorical impact of Jesus' words was unexpected and fascinating. Juxtaposing the story of Harry Potter with the biblical story helped to see things in the text that might otherwise go unnoticed. All of these have been part of the popular culture lens that was used to examine the episode—the lens of the Harry Potter narrative. They have helped to demonstrate that Jesus *does* act to resist and subvert the role of the tyrannical and oppressive empire, as well as its corrupt values, in the lives of those who choose to follow him. It is anticipated that, through this process, Harry Potter readers can come to see Jesus as a strong ally, a resister of oppression, one who fights for justice, lays aside ultimate power, and gives everything he has on behalf of others.

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[132] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 10, 26, 73. Such a world is described by Schüssler Fiorenza in her concept of ekklēsia.

This endeavour has demonstrated that the process of reading a biblical text through the lens of a popular culture work can be transformative. I trust that some of the valuable insights I have gained through this investigation will be of interest and relevance to enthusiastic readers of the Harry Potter books, as well as other popular culture works, who wish to enhance their reading of the Bible.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Oceans rise, empires fall.[1]

The irony of these lyrics from the musical *Hamilton* is striking. They are sung by the character King George III, who is soon to lose his grasp on one of Britain's prized colonized lands. The message coming through underneath the outward over-confidence of this imperial ruler is noteworthy: empires can be brought down. He has been unmasked. His is only one of many empires to be brought down throughout history. They may have been around for decades or centuries, but they can still be toppled. Similarly, the Roman Empire that looms over the story playing out in Mark's Gospel will one day fall.

The good news that Jesus proclaims throughout the Gospel narrative, in his words and deeds, has not fallen like Rome. It remains, and its presence is still powerful and empowering. He himself, unlike the rulers of empire, has laid aside dominating power in order to put others first. Looking at the Markan Jesus through the lens of Harry Potter's story has helped to illuminate this. Harry, and his willingness to lay aside the powerful Elder Wand, is a Christ-figure who parallels Jesus in a number of ways. One of those ways is how they are both committed to resisting the way of empire.

[1] Lin-Manuel Miranda, "You'll Be Back," *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

Both Harry and Jesus have their eye on a new and better way, where there is no place for tyrants like Voldemort to terrorize and oppress. For Jesus, this better way involves a new community of followers who put the needs of others first without allowing themselves to be trampled on. It is a place where everyone is welcome, where there are no outcasts. Those at the margins become the centre of this community because Jesus, the true centre, is with them. It is also a place where dominating power is laid aside and good leadership involves empowering others and standing in solidarity with them so that justice will prevail. It is characterized by a better way of doing things, a way of love and compassion where even one's enemies are humanized. This community sounds very much like Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of *ekklēsia* which "entails equality, inclusivity, citizenship, and decision-making power for all members of the Christian community."[2]

It is because Jesus has this new and better community in view that he is so insistent to tell his followers that "it is not so among you" (Mark 10:43). He does not want them to buy into the Domination System where "rulers lord it over" their subjects and where "their great ones are tyrants" (10:42). He wants them instead to serve others and put them first. He asks them to follow the same *via crucis* of self-sacrifice that he did. This way of the cross is represented and envisioned for today's readers by the *via crucis* of Harry Potter who was also willing to give his life for others. These values Jesus wants his followers to pursue are all forms of resistance. They go against the usual way of doing things that puts oneself first and grasps after power. Instead, these values

[2] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 10.

call for the empowerment of others, especially those who have been pushed to the margins.

However, while this is the picture of Jesus that can be seen in Mark, it is not the picture that many see. If people do not see Jesus as a resister, they will not follow him in resisting. If they do not see the Gospel of Mark as an engaging story of someone who includes the marginalized and empowers the oppressed, they may not pick it up and read it. This would be the case for many Harry Potter readers. There are barriers that keep them from reading Mark's Gospel and from finding out who Jesus is. Many of these are barriers of perception. Christianity on the news and in social media frequently does not come off very well. Often, these perceptions are justified. There are also barriers of knowledge. People may just not be aware of what is in the Gospels or what Jesus stood for. In both these cases, the role of a teacher or reading guide who can introduce the reader to a reading lens through which they can encounter the Gospel of Mark can be of great value.

Rohrbaugh's description of the readers of the Gospel of Mark is particularly germane to this discussion. He observes the following: "Mark's particular way of telling this story implies a group of readers who will celebrate the victories of the weak and the defeats of the strong, who find mirrored in the characters of the story and the events that engulf them the dramas of their own lives."[3] This can also be said to describe the readers of the Harry Potter novels. The values and concerns common to the human condition continue to resonate with them as well, hence their interest in this particular story. However, if they are interested in the Harry Potter story, they would also be interested in

[3] Rohrbaugh, "Social Location," 158.

the Markan story of Jesus, particularly with all the parallels and intertextual connections between them. This was the purpose for outlining these intertextualities as well as showing Harry Potter to be a Christ-figure.

Pedagogical Application

This study has explored how popular culture, namely the Harry Potter series, can be used as a lens for readers of the Gospel of Mark and other biblical texts. One area where the outcomes of this study can be used is pedagogically. The lens can be used transformatively to open up new horizons for the readers. This is done by guiding the readers through the reading strategy using several pedagogical strategies. There is significant scope for practically applying the principles learned here in teaching biblical studies. Teachers of the Bible and theology can use fiction, poetry, and other forms of popular culture and the arts to promote spiritual formation. Other educators and reading guides, outside the academy and church, can also participate in such an exercise. Literature, among other cultural artifacts, can be transformative for individuals and communities.[4] All of this can help to make the biblical texts more vibrant and alive for today's readers and help them discover how texts like the Gospels are relevant for them. If learning the Bible is engaging and even fun, it will attract more people like those Harry Potter readers who are currently unsympathetic or uninterested in the Gospels.

The key component of this endeavour is thus to have a teacher or guide to walk the readers through the process. This reading guide helps to open up new horizons for the Harry Potter audience by introducing them to the lens they can look through. This is

[4] Clark-Soles, "Introduction," 241−42.

the lens of the Harry Potter story, which they are already well acquainted with but not *as* a lens. The tools to use the lens are part of the reading strategy provided to the readers.

Moreover, there may even be circumstances where new ideas about the Harry Potter literature itself are presented to the readers. The guide thus presents new possibilities and new ways of looking at the texts, both the Harry Potter text and the Gospel of Mark text. The purpose here is not to convince the readers of a certain right way of reading the text but, rather, to offer and invite them to consider new ways. The guide initiates a link between the Harry Potter audience and the Markan story. One of the tasks of a reading guide is to ask good questions that help new readers of the Gospel of Mark to consider these new possibilities. These questions draw attention to certain aspects of the text and heighten the readers' awareness. Related to this, the guide needs to look to the readers for their own questions. In this way, they are partners with the guide and help to *guide* the learning process. It is essential for a guide to let the reader know that what they bring to the reading is important—their experiences, their feelings about the church and the Bible, their values, and their interests. The reading guide is also likely to learn from the readers and needs to be open for this prospect.

A variety of different roles could be taken on by reading guides. They could be, but do not need to be, biblical scholars teaching a university or seminary class. They could be small group leaders or book discussion guides. They could be friends, mentors, or learning partners. Their guidance could come in the form of sermon illustrations, church or Sunday School classes, or written material like a book or study guide. It could even be communicated through a podcast or video. Whatever their role, the aim is to encourage a posture of openness in the Harry Potter reader.

It is clear that a number of the scenarios for how the guide can function involve reading in community. Reading in community can, in itself, be transformational. When one reads in community, one is exposed to the interpretations of others and there is the potential to embrace new viewpoints. Both the Bible and the Harry Potter story are often read in community.[5] There is even scope within such a model for the community to be its own guide, in the same way that some small groups cooperate and take turns leading. The use of materials such as books and study guides in such settings would help with the guiding process.

The guidance process is accomplished by using effective pedagogical strategies that will connect these readers with the text and help them to engage with it. These strategies can show readers how to juxtapose two texts to find intertextual connections that will expand their horizons. Teachers who use popular culture can connect with their students' interests and can also help them "to become critical and creative readers and thinkers."[6]

Popular culture can be effectively used as a tool to teach a variety of other subjects, including theology and biblical studies, to students. As feminist and cultural critic bell hooks observes, "Whether we're talking about race or gender or class, popular culture is where the pedagogy is, it's where the learning is."[7] The pedagogical purpose is to show that the encounter with the Markan text can be engaging, compelling, and even enjoyable. After all, one of the reasons that readers are fans of Harry Potter is because they enjoy it. Connecting them with the Gospel of Mark by offering new horizons can

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[5] There are numerous Harry Potter fan communities including fanfiction groups, social media groups, and podcasts.

[6] Roncace and Gray, "Introduction," 2−3.

[7] hooks, "Cultural Criticism," 2. Note: The name bell hooks is not capitalized.

provide the potential to also see the Markan narrative in this light and to encounter Jesus in the story.

There are several helpful strategies that can be used in a classroom and, in some cases, other settings using popular culture or the arts to teach the Bible. All of these would work well with using the Harry Potter literature as a lens for the Gospel of Mark. These include: discussion questions for whole classes or small groups; freestyle or guided journaling to reflect on comparisons between the Harry Potter text and the Gospel of Mark; research papers; individual or group creative projects;[8] examining one of the books or an excerpt from it before and/or after discussing the biblical text;[9] writing a letter to one of the characters in the Harry Potter stories or the Gospel of Mark or to their authors;[10] discussions or debates on certain issues.[11] Debates can be a powerful and transformative method of helping people to consider new points of view, especially if they are selected (or choose to) debate the side that differs from their own opinion.

Another good example of what can be done, specifically with the Harry Potter texts, is the Harry Potter and the Sacred Text podcast. They go through the books chapter by chapter and pull out lenses or themes to bring the books into the lives of their listeners. They alternate between several spiritual practices that help them focus on these themes and ask good questions of the texts. These include *lectio divina* (contemplative prayer or meditation on sacred texts), florilegium (considering a collection of passages

[8] Clark-Soles, "Introduction," 245.
[9] Driggers and Strawn, "Poetry," 282.
[10] Clark-Soles et al., "Prose," 299.
[11] Clark-Soles et al., "Prose," 306.

or excerpts), and havruta (reading in pairs).[12] These practices would also be effective means of teaching and guiding using themes and passages from the Gospel of Mark. The added benefit is that a number of Harry Potter fans are already following this podcast and enthusiastically engaging in these exercises using the Harry Potter novels as their texts.

In 2008, Danielle Tumminio taught a seminar course on "Christian Theology and Harry Potter" at Yale University. She observed that, although this was not the case for all, initially many of her students did not see "questions of faith" as having particular relevance to them.[13] However, by the end of the course, some of her students were making comments like the following:

> To be honest, religion has always been a somewhat compartmentalized part of my life; maybe my family's faith (Catholic) hasn't always seemed totally relevant to my daily life, or even to the religious questions or problems that I've privately wondered about, but your class's introduction to the wonderful world of theology, I think, has made both Catholicism and Christianity in general a lot more—dare I say?—'magical' (or at the very least, engaging), and opened up a before relatively unexplored area for me.[14]

This is the kind of engagement with matters of faith that is possible with a Harry Potter audience. This is what can result from inviting these readers to discover new horizons by looking through the Harry Potter lens. The use of effective pedagogical strategies contributes to this process.

A number of specific pedagogical strategies, that can be used to enhance the use of a popular culture work like the Harry Potter narrative, will now be outlined for different topics that have been addressed in this study. The strategies will be categorized

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[12] Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, "Resources," [n.d.].
[13] Tumminio, *God and Harry Potter*, 9.
[14] Tumminio, *God and Harry Potter*, 163.

according to the three main areas of discussion in Chapters 3 and 4: Oppression in Harry Potter and the Gospel of Mark; Resistance in Harry Potter and the Gospel of Mark; Reading Mark 10:32–45 through the Lens of Harry Potter.

Oppression in Harry Potter and the Gospel of Mark

For the topic of oppressors and opponents, the reading guide or teacher could engage the Harry Potter readers in a discussion or debate considering questions such as: What defines an enemy or oppressor? Who do you think are the oppressors in the two works and why? Such a discussion would lay a foundation for understanding how oppression works in the Harry Potter narrative and how this compares to the Gospel of Mark.

Concerning terrorism, the guide could lead a discussion about terrorism throughout history and in the modern world, asking for examples of terrorists or terrorism. This discussion could also address what it feels like to be a victim of terrorism and what would motivate someone to be a terrorist. This could then be connected with the Harry Potter and Markan contexts, discussing what victims of terrorism in these works (including Jesus) would have experienced. Bringing their own perceptions of the topic into the discussion would make this more meaningful for the readers and be instrumental in getting to look at something like the crucifixion of Jesus in a new way.

The subject of violence and murder is a good example of how parallels not only can be drawn between the Harry Potter and Markan narratives, but also with what is going on in the world today. Guided discussions or journaling about racially motivated killing and police brutality could be tied in with how violence and murder were carried

out in the two works, thus helping this conversation to resonate with what is of great concern to many people today.

Complicity is a matter that requires self-reflection so an activity like journaling where the Harry Potter readers could write about ways that they themselves are complicit or have been complicit in the past, following a discussion about complicity in Harry Potter and Mark's Gospel.

An activity where those with certain privileges (for example white males) get to take a specific number of steps forward at different points in the exercise would be a useful one here to address marginalization. Combined with a discussion afterwards, this could emphasize to the Harry Potter audience what it feels like to have privilege or to be marginalized and would also help to reinforce how both Harry and Jesus are strong allies for the marginalized.

With respect to systemic oppression, a group activity where the participants brainstorm the similarities and differences between of how power structures work in the modern world, the wizarding world, and the Markan world would help to draw out these intersections. These resonances can, in turn, help to use this literature as a lens to highlight instances of corrupt systems and oppression in the Gospel of Mark. In the same way, exploring the novels for examples of how resistance is used against such oppression can provide a more effective reading lens to observe resistance in Mark.

Resistance in Harry Potter and the Gospel of Mark

Contrapuntal reading is itself a practice that would be beneficial for Harry Potter readers to cultivate because it helps to highlight new perspectives. Writing a letter to someone

you disagree with, participating in a debate on the side that does not reflect your views, or reading a passage with a prompt to consider it from another point of view would all help to encourage contrapuntal reading. Another activity with rich potential is the practice of havruta (paired learning where two scholars, through discussion and debate, help to sharpen each other's insight into the text."[15] Through such exercises, Harry Potter fans can learn to see the Gospel of Mark in new ways and also consider Jesus in new ways. To see Hermione and Jesus as models of a contrapuntal approach would be help to spark a similar stance in Harry Potter readers.

In order to underscore the intertextual connections between allies in Harry Potter and the Gospel of Mark, one helpful pedagogical activity would be to have the Harry Potter audience write a letter to a character they consider an ally in one of the works, comparing them to an ally in the other work. Using their Harry Potter lens would thus help to draw out how allyship is portrayed in the Gospel of Mark, particularly in association with Jesus.

On the subject of community and fictive kinship, a guide for the Harry Potter audience might have them write a poem or essay about someone to whom they are not related but whom they consider family or community. This would lead to a discussion about the importance of fictive kinship in the stories of Jesus and Harry Potter. The Harry Potter lens would be used through this to reveal the importance of family and community to Jesus.

Love is a key theme in both works and introducing the Harry Potter reader to the lens can help to highlight it further. A useful conversation would be about the concept of

[15] Schultz, "Havruta," para. 4.

God as love. A reading guide for the Harry Potter audience could present them with the following statement by Tumminio for discussion:

> I would like to suggest that if there is anything akin to a God-figure in the books, it does not appear in the guise of human flesh. Rather, the one thing with the power to defeat Voldemort's evil, the goodness to want to, and the knowing to guide the operation is love. It is love that ultimately motivates Lily and Harry's sacrificial actions, love that keeps Hermione and Ron at Harry's side, love that prompts Neville's nobility in book seven, and love that saves the wizarding world at the end of the series. In fact, Rowling makes a point of driving home again and again the importance of love as a binding power, a power greater than all others that has the capacity to save.[16]

In light of the close association that Jesus placed on God and love, as well as his own loving and compassionate way of interacting with people, a conversation started by such a quote would certainly have the potential to expand the readers' horizons and consider the centrality of love in both the Harry Potter story and the Markan narrative. Once again, a new perspective on Jesus could be kindled.

When considering the question of Jesus amplifying Harry in his inclusion of the excluded, an activity where comparisons are drawn between the two would be beneficial. This could take the form of a chart or Venn diagram of the comparison, or it could involve a guided discussion of the ways that Harry is like Jesus and the ways that Jesus goes beyond Harry. Through this exercise, the Harry Potter lens could help the reader discover more about what Jesus is like.

The concept of how Jesus encourages empowerment and self-advocacy would be highlighted by having participants read some excerpts about Neville before and after they read the story of the bleeding woman or the Syrophoenician woman. This would

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[16] Tumminio, *God and Harry Potter*, 13.

help focus the Harry Potter lens on this characteristic of Jesus as well as the admirable character of the two women.

It would seem, by definition, that exploring humour, symbolic resistance, and story needs to be engaging for the audience. Having participants share their own jokes, poems, skits, object lessons, or stories interacting with the Harry Potter or Markan literature would be an appealing and fun exercise and would highlight these elements. Learning to know Jesus and the Markan storyteller as those who engage in humour and story would make them more appealing for the audience as well. The Tribute episode, and its symbolic resistance, has scope for engagement with the Harry Potter audience as well. To bring it to the character of Harry Potter, a reading guide could ask the readers in what circumstances Harry has had a generous interpretation of others and held hope for them to change. Voldemort would likely be an example that arose, although there are others. Those examples could then be discussed with this Tribute story and other episodes where Jesus leaves room for others to choose a better way. This could, in turn, lead to a discussion of the importance of allowing space for others to change in the context of social activism. Another discussion topic around this episode would involve the matter of resisting empire, including in what ways Harry challenges how Voldemort's empire does things and in what ways Jesus challenges how the Roman Empire does things.

A brainstorming session on civil obedience could help to sharpen the Harry Potter lens on this topic for the Gospel of Mark. The discussion could form around the question of how Harry Potter and Jesus might show non-violent resistance if they were facing some of the specific injustices that we are facing in our world today. This would

help the Harry Potter audience to see Jesus as someone engaged with the questions of our day.

In terms of speaking truth to power, a reading guide could help bring the Harry Potter lens closer to the Markan text by presenting a number of scenarios and asking what Harry would say and what Jesus would say in response to each. This would help highlight Jesus as a resister who speaks out against injustice.

Reading Mark 10:32–45 through the Lens of Harry Potter

The transformative potential of the journey motif can resonate with an audience. The Harry Potter reading guide can enhance this resonance for the audience by asking good questions about the meaning of journey in a person's life. Having them write a travel journal for both Harry and his friends and Jesus and his friends can help the reader to empathize with what it would be like to be on each of those journeys.

The Harry Potter lens can highlight features associated with the passion predictions, including repetition, irony, sacrifice, and *via crucis*. A reading guide could augment this process by providing the audience with a meaningful exercise to help draw out the connections. In this case, a spiritually reflective practice like *lectio divina* would be appropriate to aid in meditating on the two episodes. A discussion afterwards would allow the readers to share how they experienced each of the events through the reflection. This could be quite significant for the participants and has rich potential to have an impact on them and draw them to the story of Jesus in Mark.

For the episode concerning James and John's request, watching the video clip of this episode from the performance of the Gospel of Mark by Max McLean clearly shows

its humour. This is something that would draw the Harry Potter audience who find humour entertaining.[17] Indeed, this performance of the whole Gospel of Mark is engaging and presents it as a story. Since Harry Potter fans are well-disposed to story, this is likely to be an exercise that captivates them and would be beneficial to use at any stage in the reading process. A discussion of the oral nature of the Gospel and the likelihood that it was often performed could also accompany the screening.

The presentation of the McLean video to the Harry Potter audience would extend to the whole Mark 10:32–45 episode and, in particular, would underscore how humour highlights the teachings of Jesus. A discussion of humour in this episode compared with how Voldemort and Umbridge are depicted could accompany it, using the Harry Potter lens to connect the readers with things they can resonate with in the story of Jesus in Mark.

The examination of symbolic inversion through irony in the teachings of Jesus lends itself to a creative exercise using art, poetry, music or skits. The idea would be to choose an example of symbolic inversion, particularly one characterized by irony, from each of the works, and then present these to the larger reading community. Creative endeavours like this have the potential to engage the participants.

For the topic of laying aside the Elder Wand, a teacher or reading guide would need to facilitate the use of the Harry Potter lens by the audience by helping them make the intertextual connections. One exercise would involve reading the Harry Potter account of the Elder Wand before and after reading the Mark 10 episode and providing

[17] McLean, "Mark's Gospel," 56:08–57:45. This is an oral performance of the Mark's Gospel that allows the audience to hear (and see) it in a different way.

them with questions such as the following to consider: What would ultimate power have meant for Harry? What would it have meant for Jesus? Why was each of them willing to give up ultimate power?

A discussion of power is indicated for this topic of Jesus as one who is truly powerful. Tying it in with current issues would make it particularly relevant for Harry Potter readers. For example, how conditions in our world such as male domination and white supremacy relate to power and how similar conditions may also be seen in the Harry Potter stories and Mark's Gospel.

How Jesus amplifies Harry as a Christ-figure with respect to servanthood, self-sacrifice, and liberation of others has been explored. A useful activity in terms of Christ-figure can be done in either a class or a small discussion group. Harry Potter readers can be asked at the beginning of the course or group sessions whether they believe Harry is a Christ-figure and then asked again after several weeks to see if their views have changed. A helpful question is: "What specific traits, deeds, quotations, or plot devices support such a label?"[18] A related or follow-up activity would be a debate on whether Harry is a Christ-figure. Considering Harry as a Christ-figure is likely to get Harry Potter readers to think carefully about who Jesus is and in which ways Harry does or does not reflect him.

To round out this adventure, a celebration would be an apt way to pay tribute to a reading community—some sort of gathering or feast to commemorate what they have experienced together. An important part of this experience would be how they have engaged with the Markan text and what impact Jesus and his story have had on them.

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[18] Clark-Soles et al., "Prose," 306.

Resistance as Application

In addition to the pedagogical approaches discussed, another area of application and relevance for our world today is resistance. Jesus is, of course, an important example of resistance and sacrifice. Others, throughout history, have also opposed oppressive authorities and empires of various kinds at great cost. Robyn Maynard, in her book *Policing Black Lives*, points to "the very real realities of Black refusal, subversion, resistance and creativity that have flourished, despite centuries of systematic hostility and oppression . . . [T]here exist extraordinary histories of resilience, many documented and more still unwritten, that are a testament to a politics of sustained Black cultural, intellectual and spiritual creative practices, despite policies intended to extinguish these acts. These histories span centuries."[19] Resisting can be difficult, heart-breaking, and dangerous. The results may be a long time in coming. Resistance requires persistence and courage in the face of what can sometimes be great risk. I believe Jesus' way of life and teachings show us that he wants us to resist; he wants us to stand in solidarity with those who have been oppressed and pushed to the margins. This is an important part of the *via crucis* we are called to follow.

The Gospel of Mark is a story—a powerful narrative to which its original hearers could relate because it was connected with their own world and experiences. However, this impact is not restricted to the original audience. Readers and hearers today can still hear this story and understand its timeless message. If that message becomes more meaningful to those in its audience who "hear" it through a popular culture lens, that should be encouraged.

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[19] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, 14.

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